

**Modern Literature
of the United Arab Emirates**

Barbara Michalak-Pikulska

Modern Literature of the United Arab Emirates

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Introduction

The United Arab Emirates is somewhere where rapid changes in the country and society can be seen for oneself with one's own eyes. History and tradition meet with a western style of life. The young generation which has gone beyond the borders of desert villages has caused a development in culture and literature. On the one hand they feel a great sense of respect for their own past and for continuing the traditions of their ancestors while on the other they are attempting to adapt themselves to the demands of the state and world developing around them.

In travelling to the United Arab Emirates I had no idea as to the richness of its cultural-literary life. Up until then the Emirates had been associated with wealth, architectural wonders like the tallest building in the world, Burj Al Khalifa or the Burj al-‘Arab Hotel in the shape of a sail. There, however, it turned out that the authorities are conducting a full-scale policy on culture. Numerous institutions have been founded to support film, theatre, literary and musical events. Libraries and literary salons are being created, supported by leading figures from cultural life. Book fairs are one of the most important cultural events in the Emirates, enjoying with each year increased popularity.

The United Arab Emirates are a union of seven independent sheikdoms situated in the south-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. These seven emirates: Abū Ḥabī, Dūbayy, ash-Shāriqa, Rā's al-Khayma, Fūjayra, Ajmān, and Umm al-Qūwayn were formerly ruled over by Britain as the Trucial States, gaining independence in December 1971. In the course of mere decades the United Arab Emirates have emerged as one of the fastest developing countries of the world.

The aim of my book *Modern Literature of the United Arab Emirates* is to present the modern literature of the Emirates as a reflection of the socio-economic changes that have occurred in the country. I desire to bring the reader closer to the interesting and unique, although young panorama of Emirate literary life. Since the 1970s it has experienced a dramatic development; today abounding in names which have yet to have seen the publication of critical and academic studies on them. The individual writers and poets dealt with in the book I personally met during my stay in the Emirates in January 2010. I conducted interviews with them as well as assembling source materials. I am extremely grateful to them for the time they found for me.

The first part of the book is devoted to modern Emirate poetry. Here are presented three currents in its development: the classical represented by *qaṣīda al-‘amūdī, taṣ‘īla* – based on a single metrical foot, as well as a limited amount of free verse – *qaṣīdat an-nathr*. As far as the subject matter dealt with by Emirate poets is concerned then one may note that often reference is made to nationalistic and patriotic issues. A love for one's homeland, sacrifice for it, family relations as well as the social situation are issues that often repeat in Emirate lyric poetry.

Prose has been presented in the stages of its development together with the complex problem area of social matters and those of tradition and custom. The first stage relates

to the generation of pioneers, i.e. those who first adopted the short form of artistic expression. New phenomena became the inspiration for local writers, with the dominant question being that of identity as well as the role of tradition in the building of a national consciousness and awareness. The stage which is still in progress is that represented by writers who know the achievements of the pioneers of the Emirate short story and who are living out the experiences of this former generation. This milieu contains numerous young writers who have clearly embarked on a different thematic area than their predecessors. Here are emphasised the problems of the individual in his/her relations to their fellow man. Questions of the internal condition of a modern Emirati, issues presented within the context of globalisation, consumerism, the crisis of traditional values as well as the current situation within the Arab world.

The part devoted to drama aims at a short presentation of the most important events in the history of the Emirate theatre movement, starting in the 1960s as well as an examination of its most eminent representatives.

The book *Modern Literature of the United Arab Emirates* intends to fill a gap within Arab literary studies, as Polish and European works devoted to contemporary Arab literature do not contain information on the subject of modern Emirate literature.

At the end of the book are to be found biographical notes on the writers and poets as well as an extensive bibliography of their works. In the book the English system of transliteration for phrases, names and geographical place names has been adopted. The publication of the book was funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

A CD with the original Arabic texts is included with the book.

Part One

Modern Poetry of the United Arab Emirates

Poetry – Introduction

*Modern Arabic poetry has been subject to continuous experiments within all poetic components – those of content, idea, language and form.*¹ In the 19th century Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Barūdī (1837–1904) cleared the Arabic *qaṣīda* of stylistic ornamentation imbuing it at the same time with a current socio-political content. After the first World War the succeeding generation, inspired by 19th century English poetry, concentrated in the circles of the *Dīwān* group and was critical of the representatives of the traditional school: Aḥmad Shawqī and Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm were of the opinion that this trend *has to give way to a renewal, as each new epoch requires from poetry changes both in form as well as in content.*² The most prominent representatives of the new trend like for instance: ‘Ab-bās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād, Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Māzinī and ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Shukrī, introduced a variety of rhymes into their poems. Their activity laid the way for the later generation of Egyptian Romantics of the Apollo group (1927–1935), which was initiated by Aḥmad Zākī Abū Shādī. The Romantic trends are also prominent in a *dīwān* by Abū al-Qāsim ash-Shabbī, a Tunisian poet affiliated to this group. Such a Romantic current gained popularity as it offered new aesthetic values to the poets. This phenomenon was accompanied by a steadily growing interest in world literature. There appeared voices that called directly for the need to adapt foreign writings so as to enrich indigenous literature with universalistic features.³ One ought to bear in mind that this particular period, following the Second World War, was especially important for Arabic culture. It was a time when new views were being clarified, where ideas and concepts concerning art, politics and social life competed and clashed. The new geopolitical order in the Middle East was, in the majority of cases, enforced, hence the initial mood of bitter disappointment common among the Arabs. However, this was relatively quickly replaced by an ambition to catch up with others and to manifest their own value.

An important role in the development of Arabic literature was performed by émigré poets of the ar-Rābiṭa al-Qalamiyya group, which was established in New York. The founders of this group: Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān, Amīn ar-Rīḥānī and Mikhā’il Nu‘ayma supported the unity of a poetic piece and the poet’s right to express his own feelings. Mikhā’il Nu‘ayma believed that *real literature shows, both in the process of its examination as well as in the aesthetic reception, constant universal values as far as time and man are concerned.*⁴ In their works they touched on universal human, social and philosophical problems, as well as expressing their longing for their homeland.⁵ Under

¹ Salmā Khaḍrā’ al-Jayyūsī, *Ash-Shi‘r al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir, taṭawwuruh wa mustaqbaluh*, in: ‘*Ālam al-fikr*, t. 4, no. 2, al-Kuwayt 1973, p. 12.

² Adnan Abbas, *Poezja arabska*, Poznań 2000, p. 33.

³ Cf. Muḥammad Jābir al-Anṣārī (ed.), *Ibrāhīm al-‘Urayyīd wa ish ‘ā’ al-baḥrayn ath-thaqāfi*, al-Kuwayt 1996, p. 117.

⁴ Mikhā’il Nu‘ayma, *Al-Ghirbāl*, Bairut 1981, p. 69.

⁵ Cf. Józef Bielawski, Krystyna Skarżyńska-Bocheńska, Jolanta Jasińska, *Nowa i współczesna literatura arabska 19 i 20 w.*, vol. I, Warszawa 1978, pp. 216–292.

the influence of English and American poetry Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān and Amīn ar-Riḥānī generated a new poetic form in the Arabic poetry *shi'r manthūr* (prose poetry), which was to be replaced in the sixties by poetry in prose (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*).⁶

*The fifties constituted a period of change in poetic form as well as in its understanding. The language alone is proof of the birth of a creative avant-garde. Free verse (shi'r ḥurr), in which the basic unit is the foot (taf'ila) were published by Nāzik al-Malā'ika (al-Kūlirā) and Badr Shākīr as-Sayyāb (Hal kāna ḥubban?) and attracted many supporters and followers. Nāzik al-Malā'ika attempted in her study **Qaḍāyā ash-shi'r al-mu'āṣir** to prove that shi'r ḥurr (free verse) derives from the prosody pattern developed by al-Farāhīdī.⁷*

In the United Arab Emirates, in conjunction with the economic development brought about by the discovery of oil, there was noted a substantial revival in many fields, particularly in education and literature. The works of local writers not only reached the neighboring countries of the Arabic Peninsula, but achieved a level equal or comparable to that of the literary productions of Egypt, Iraq or Lebanon.⁸

Contemporary Emirate poets have written both classical verse poems (*shi'r 'āmūdī*) as well as free verse poems (*taf'ila*) and prose poems (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*). Nowadays, in modern Emirati poetry the classical movement is represented by Shihāb Ghānim, Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Ubayd, 'Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, Rahaf al-Mubārak, Jawriyya al-Khāja. The at-taf'ila poetry is composed by: Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, Ṣāliḥa Ghābish, Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, Karīm Ma'tūq, Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī, Khulūd al-Mu'allā, Nāṣir Jubrān, 'Alī al-Sha'ālī. The poets of *qaṣīdat an-nathr* (prose poems) are: Zābiyya Khamīs, Thānī as-Suwaydī, Khālīd al-Baddūr, Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, Khālīd ar-Rāshid, Nu-jūm al-Ghānim, Muḥammad al-Mazrū'i, al-Hanūf Muḥammad, Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, Maysūn Ṣaqr, Aḥmad al-'Asam, Wafā' Khāzandār, Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī and 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb.

⁶ Adnan Abbas, *Poezja...*, pp. 164–165.

⁷ Nāzik al-Malā'ika, *Qaḍāyā ash-shi'r al-mu'āṣir*, Beirut 1981, p. 7.

⁸ Cf. Barbara Michalak-Pikulska, *Modern Poetry and Prose of Oman*, Kraków 2002, *Modern Poetry and Prose of Bahrain*, Kraków 2006.

Chapter I

Classical Poetry (*al-‘amūdī*)

The overriding aim of classical poetry (*al-‘amūdī*) was the preservation of the rules of unity between metre and rhyme (*waḥdat al-wazn wa al-qāfiya*). Classical and neo-classical poets remain true to this rule to this day.

The classical genre within the contemporary poetry of the United Arab Emirates is represented by: Shihāb Ghānim, Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd, ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, Rahaf al-Mubārak, Jawriyya al-Khāja.

The book *Dīwān Shihāb Ghānim* by **Shihāb Ghānim** contains seven thematically divided small volumes written in the classical form ‘*amūdī*, as well as *taf’īla* (poems basing themselves on a single foot, which repeats itself depending on the length of the metre). In dozens of poems the poet categorically calls for a rejection of passivity and disillusionment with life in favour of forging one’s own fate, caring for the future of one’s family and country. Ghānim’s work is characterised by an enormity of thematic and emotional variety, which figure in the individual volumes.

In the poem *Burj* (*The Tower*) from the first part *Bakḥbūkh wa qaṣā’id ukhrā* (*Ab-racadabra and other poems*) recollections of the poet’s granddaughter – Hanūf – allow the past to be recalled:

*I looked at the garishly coloured tower.
My sweet granddaughter bestrews me with her smiles,
She is the descendant of those who grazed camels
And sheep.⁹*

In looking on at his granddaughter the poet becomes aware of the social and economic changes. He has enormous respect for his own past yet is aware that the granddaughter – as a representative of the future – will live in a different world than did her forebears. It seems to raise the question as to whether this could lead to a generational conflict, or result in the collapse of social traditions.

The poet places enormous hope on future generations. He believes that despite the changes in social relations the young will cultivate many of the traditions of family life.

Love is the main subject of poems of the second part of the volume, *Ma‘ānī al-hawā ‘indī wa qaṣā’id ukhrā* (*The Meaning of Love According to Me and Other Poems*). In the poem *Ma‘ānī al-hawā ‘indī* (*The Meaning of Love According to Me*), written in the classical form *ghazal*, the poet explains what this feeling is for him:

⁹ Shihāb Ghānim, *Burj*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb Ghānim*, Abū Zābi 2009, p. 19.

*For me the sense of love is delicacy
And the patience of the written for man's lot
[...]
Love is nothing else than the surrendering of the soul with satisfaction
And devotion in moments of difficulty.¹⁰*

In the poem *Uhibbuki (I Love You)* he thus addresses a beloved woman:

*I love you, know that I love you.
Even when love is full of sorrow and troubles,
Even when in a mood,
That river still flows in my heart.
Even when I feel the drought of the desert on my lips,
My heart is an oasis, the dew and grass.¹¹*

The love described above is true. Its loyal colours are emphasised by Arabic symbols: the oasis and the desert.

It is difficult to imagine such rich output without panegyrics and poems praising the homeland. They are the content of the third part, *Sawfa ya'ū fajr wa qaṣā'id ukhrā* (*Dawn Approaches and Other Poems*). The songs and hymns have the traditional 'amudi form, for example *ʿĪd al-Imārāt (The Emirates' Holiday)*.

*Emirates Holiday, your smell is sweet
Like jasmine, basil and other flowers.
The Gulf sings your songs
And every heart repeats these songs, throbbing strongly.¹²*

Shihāb Ghānim wrote the poem *Fi ʿīd al-ittiḥād (On the Holiday of Unity)* for the Emirates' Holiday. In it he emphasises how the small sheikhdoms have benefitted from this event as well as also – as it appears – how overjoyed he is by the removal of the artificial divisions of peoples who once lived undivided:

*The borders are removed... there are no longer borders,
As if they had never ever been there.¹³*

The poem *Ḥakīm al-ʿArab (The Arabs' Sage)* is a panegyric in praise of the dead ruler of the Emirates, Zayda, who led to the unification of the country:

*You sat on a throne of love
And you were adored by the nation with the love you bestowed on them.¹⁴*

Shihāb Ghānim in the subsequent poems of this small volume turns his attention to the evil rife in the contemporary world. In the text *Akhī Ḥamad wa ash-shuhub tajma'u*

¹⁰ Shihāb Ghānim, *Maʿānī al-hawā ʿindī*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

¹¹ Shihāb Ghānim, *Uhibbuki*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

¹² Shihāb Ghānim, *ʿĪd al-Imārāt*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

¹³ Shihāb Ghānim, *Fi ʿīd al-ittiḥād*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

¹⁴ Shihāb Ghānim, *Ḥakīm al-ʿArab*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

banyanā (*The Hamad Brothers Link Us With the Light of the Heavens*) he emphasises the significance of Islamic civilisation and its greatness in the past:

*Arabs in Islam were the cradle of civilisation.
They achieved the peak.*¹⁵

Subsequent fragments of the poem bring with them considerations on the subject of the reality in which the author lives.

War turns people into murderers and criminals, exposing the cruellest basest traits. The eighty-eight day siege of Beirut in 1982 by the Israeli army was to result in the destruction of the PLO in Lebanon. He was to contain his reflections on the subject in the poem *Bayrūt 82* (*Beirut 82*):

*Oh beautiful Beirut, where you have become accustomed to relax, listening to music,
Now already will you not sleep –
Unless on mines
Or under the hell of bombs
And the Zionists’ dust of hatred.*¹⁶

The massacre in the towns of Ṣabrā and Shātīlā presented in the poem *al-Madhbaḥa qabla al-akhīra* (*The Penultimate Carnage*) is an image of the military machine directed against civilians. The poet suffers together with the whole of Palestine. For Palestinian society had lived for years as if a hounded animal. In order to understand this huge amount of suffering one needs to find oneself in the situation of the oppressed. In subsequent poems Shihāb Ghānim lists all the massacres conducted in Palestine and the Lebanon by the Israeli Army: Dayr Yāsīn, Ṣabrā and Shātīlā, Hebron, Qānā and Jinīn. The poet has concentrated the means of expression on the presentation of human barbarity, the degeneration of humanity and extermination which destroy people and fling their families into suffering:

*On the streets lie
The remains of the killed
On every road the body of a slaughtered girl
undressed
...the ripped belly of the pregnant
...the hanging head of a man killed
...and the fingers of children immersed in the mud...
Sabra does not pulsate with life
Shatila is thrown into a red silence and has become a grave.*¹⁷

The poem *al-Kayl bi-mikyālayn* (*Double Standard*) is a criticism of the policy of Western Europe and the United States of America: it accuses them of unequal treatment of Arabs and Israelis in the same matter:

¹⁵ Shihāb Ghānim, *Akhī Ḥamad wa ash-shuhub tajma ‘u banyanā*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁶ Shihāb Ghānim, *Bayrūt 82*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

¹⁷ Shihāb Ghānim, *al-Madhbaḥa qabla al-akhīra*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 185–186.

*Double measure
Applied in broad daylight
In all matters concerning Zionism
In every matter,
Even in the matter of freedom.
And they say to us: our western civilization
Is the greatest achievement of the human race!!!¹⁸*

The author does not forget also about the Muslims in Kosovo and other countries. In the poem *al-Mawt ...wa al-ḥaḍārāt* (*Death and Civilization*) he recalls the slaughter of Muslims by Serbs:

*The mass grave in Kosovo
Without plaques with names.
Now you note them down,
You fear the Serbs,
So they don't harm you.
But in a moment
Your body will be thrown to the grave
Where a thousand emaciated bodies lie
[...]
O, what shocking scenes here I see!
Our world is witness...!
Mass graves in Kosovo –
Our century breathes its last breath.
This is the age of computers,
Of nuclear energy
[...]
People are without understanding!
And evil lies within them!¹⁹*

Shihāb Ghānim is unable to understand people who have already experienced at least one war and yet despite this strive towards another. They are unable to draw conclusions and fight on, bringing pain and suffering to humanity:

*These are times of aspirations towards surrealism,
The times of the atomic bomb,
Chemical weapons,
Carpet bombing,
Bacteriological,
And terrorism.
In this time of surrealism
Everything gets mixed,
The madman becomes the sage.²⁰*

¹⁸ Shihāb Ghānim, *al-Kayl bi-mikyālayn*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 224.

¹⁹ Shihāb Ghānim, *al-Mawt ...wa al-ḥaḍārāt*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 244–245.

²⁰ Shihāb Ghānim, *az-Zaman as-surriyālī*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 254–255.

The last title poem of the third volume *Sawfa ya ‘ī fājir* (*Dawn Approaches*) concludes with an optimistic accent. The poet sees light in the tunnel, and the approaching dawn is a symbol of hope:

*After the dark comes the day,
And on our trees birds will sing.
The heirs of the Caliph²¹ will not sleep.
We will awake from a long death,
And the gravediggers will die out.²²*

In the fourth volume, *al-Makhād fī Wādī ‘Abqar wa qasa’id ukhrā* (*Childbirth in the Valley of Genies and Other Poems*), Shihāb Ghānim contemplates poetic creativity and its role in the life of man. In the poem *ash-Shi‘r* (*On Poetry*) the poet emphasises that poetry should fulfil a lofty function in social life, to propagate praise for life and love and to be testimony of the culture of his nation:

*People! Poetry is a waste of time,
If there is no feeling in it.
Poetry is not merely image and imagination,*

[...]
*It is not only rhymes and rhythms,
Melody and music,
It is not culture and language,
Overfilled with light like the Koran.
[...]
But it is all of this together.²³*

In *ghazāl Washwasha* (*The Whisper*) the author talks thus about poetry:

*In the middle of the night she came to me
Whispers me to my ear
[...]
I came together with poetry
So let us go and create beautiful verse.²⁴*

The poems of the fifth part, *Araq wa qaṣā’id ukhrā* (*Insomnia and Other Poems*), in a simple way relate to the problems of modern man, his anxiety, uncertainty. The contemporary world is characterised by the demise of fundamental values. From the entire work *Fī ‘asr al-istihlāk* (*In the Era of Consumption*) there is visible a depression, a reflection on the loss and minuteness of man in the world of consumption:

*Oh,
What does science and logic give you?*

²¹ Khālīd ibn al-Walīd – a symbol of Arab might, an Arab leader and hero of Arab conquests.

²² Shihāb Ghānim, *Sawfa ya ‘ī fājir*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 286.

²³ Shihāb Ghānim, *ash-Shi‘r*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

²⁴ Shihāb Ghānim, *Washwasha*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 299.

*In this era of consumption
 In what way does ignorance harm you?
 In the age of easy money
 [...]
 Oh,
 Why don't you close your eyes and sleep...
 But you won't forget about the crimes at large in this world?*²⁵

Part six entitled *Min ayna adkhul fi-l-mirthāt yā abatī wa qaṣā'id ukhrā* (*Oh Father, How to Enter an Elegy and Other Poems*), contains elegies devoted to the already dead Emirate leaders, Zayd, his father and friends as an example to the dead Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh.

The moving poem *Wā Zāydaḥ!* (*Oh Zayd!*) is a posthumous homage to the beloved leader:

*Oh Zayd, my eyes have glazed over with tears,
 Pain has gripped my heart,
 Bitterness flows in my blood....
 [...]
 The sage of all Arabs has departed.
 His life like an example to others,
 He reconciled foes,
 Nobody doubted in his nobility,
 None matched his generousness,
 All took advantage of his generosity, Bedouins and the settled.*²⁶

Several days after the death of one of the most eminent Palestinian poets, Maḥmūd Darwīsh, the poet wrote a beautiful elegy in his honour – *Darwīsh ... wadā'an* (*Darwish's Farewell*):

*Darwish recited, two musicians
 Played on the strings of the lute.
 Sometimes
 Darwish sang in honour of love
 About death,
 And the ravaged homeland.*²⁷

The last volume, *ad-Durūb al-khuḍr wa qaṣā'id ukhrā* (*Green Paths and Other Poems*), was devoted to Islam, the prophet Muhammad and God. In the poem *Lahu al-asmā' al-ḥusnā* (*His Most Beautiful Names*) the poet lists all the ninety nine subjects of the All-Mighty. In turn the poem *Bi-abī anta yā rasūl wa ummī* (*I Will Protect You, Envoy of God*) came into being after the controversial event for all Muslims that occurred

²⁵ Shihāb Ghānim, *Fī 'asr al-istihlāk*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 315.

²⁶ Shihāb Ghānim, *Wā Zāydaḥ!*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 369–370.

²⁷ Shihāb Ghānim, *Darwīsh ... wadā'an*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 384.

following the publication in Denmark of a caricature of the Prophet Muḥammad. Shihāb Ghānim defended the Prophet with the words:

*Teach them... who is the envoy,
How he gained our hearts and minds.
Lament those who defamed him,
For they are like Abu Jahl²⁸
And a similar fate awaits them.²⁹*

The most beautiful month for Muslims is the month of fasting – Ramaḍān. It has an unrepeatable and unique atmosphere, which is reflected in the poem *Yā hilāl aṣ-ṣiyām* (*Oh the Crescent Moon of the Fast*):

*Every year you come with blessings
And gifts,
Oh you crescent moon of the fast!
We pray and give alms,
Time devoted to prayer to God.³⁰*

The poems of **Shihāb Ghānim** affect every reader, regardless of his poetic sensitivities. They are written in the classical 'amūdī form, but they also do not lack poetic pieces based on the single metre foot – the *taf'īla*. The poet's work is highly regarded as an example of creativity that proclaims the truth on man and his embroilments. The author reaches in his poems to the deepest recesses of the soul, displaying the truth about man, embroiling himself in his psyche and feelings, intertwining the motifs of life and death, war and peace, the passing and arising fears that herein occur.

Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Ubayd creates verse based on classical Arab models of poetry composition. This is traditional poetry (*al-'amūdī*). His poetic volume *Min aghānī al-'āshiq al-qadīm* (*The Songs of a Former Lover*) opens with the elegy *Ba 'da khamsin* (*After Fifty Years*) which is dedicated to the poet Khalfān bin Muṣbiḥ on the fiftieth anniversary of his death. The poem is evidence of the poet's authenticity in experience:

*Oh Khalfan, your songs of love
Are immortal, while the love in them is the most important.
Loved for fifty years
People think of you with mind and heart.
Together with you have departed the letters and rhymes,
And the poems which you recited alienated.
Fifty years have passed,
And yet you still live on in our memory, tempting with your imagination.³¹*

²⁸ Abū Jahl – he who defamed the Prophet and promised him that after death he would go to hell.

²⁹ Shihāb Ghānim, *Bi-abī anta yā rasūl wa ummī*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 410.

³⁰ Shihāb Ghānim, *Yā hilāl aṣ-ṣiyām*, in: *Dīwān Shihāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 417.

³¹ Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Ubayd, *Ba 'da khamsin*, in: *Min aghānī al-'āshiq al-qadīm*, ash-Shāriqa 1998, p. 9.

Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd considers Khalfān bin Muṣbiḥ to be his master, teacher and guide in the world of thought and literary values. He describes his qualities and contribution to the development of poetry. He also touches on an extremely important question – of poetry as art and its timeless influence and effect.

The next elegy in the volume is the poem: *Fī riḥāb Allāh (Under God’s Protection)*, dedicated to the deceased sheik Muḥammad bin Khālīd Al Qāsimī. This is a homage in honour of this mighty ruler and the country that created him. Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd expresses love and respect for the deceased, underlining at the same time his immense bravery:

*How could I forget about you
And the children who still kiss you.
How could I forget about you,
When feeling inspires me to write
[...]
How brave you were
God’s destiny was death at such a moment
Clearly you were worthy
You were like a courageous knight.*³²

Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd praises the service of the deceased, presenting him as a courageous and loved individual. The elegy creates a mood of sorrow, melancholy and pride in relation to the personage of Sheikh Muḥammad. He presents the void and despair that reigned following his departure. This can be overcome only through belief in God. The poem is written in a tone of sorrowful recollection.

Love as a timeless feeling gives sense to human life. For hundreds of years poets have presented it as a powerful passion which is not subject to rational analyses and which slips out of all control. It is a feeling stronger than human will, which is powerless in its face. Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd in the poem *Laylā* makes reference to the ‘Udhra love tradition, the heroes of which come from the ‘Udhra tribe the most famous couple of whom are considered to be the Qays known as Majnūn and Laylā. Their beautiful love for each other was stronger than death. In the poem the heroine is a girl by the name of Laylā:

*Oh my Laylā, they said that we would meet for sure.
Hope draws my heart close to you.
I have written an erotic poem for you for I wanted you to be
Present with me if only in
verse,
Because without you my heart breaks...*³³

Most clearly love is the sense and meaning of the poet’s life. The feeling that he has bestowed on his beloved is holy, unique and never to be repeated. This is an image of ideal love, one based on a union of souls, which is inexplicably linked to suffering.

³² Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd, *Fī riḥāb Allāh*, in: *Min aghānī...*, op.cit., pp. 31–32.

³³ Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd, *Laylā*, in: *Min aghānī...*, op.cit., p. 58.

In the poem *Waladī* (*My Son*) the poet is directed by feelings toward a child – to his own son; he presents the strong bond that links him:

*In my small heart
Resides joyous love.
I asked God for you to be
The hope for my country.*³⁴

The author expresses fatherly pride and belief in the patriotism of his son. He believes that his son will achieve great things for the fatherland.

The last poem of the volume under discussion, *Tawba* (*Absolution*), recalls a confession on the part of the lyrical I. Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd speaks out not only in his name but also in the name of friends, something borne out by the alternating of the singular and plural form. The author asks for merciful and compassionate God to forgive them the sins of youth:

*This life drove us to temptation,
To pleasure and drink.
We have immersed ourselves in its charms
And we did not want to hear the calls from the minaret.
[...]
My sins have tormented my soul and heart,
I felt unhappy and lived in suffering.*³⁵

The poem constitutes a form of summarising, a synthesis of youth and looking at it with distance for together with the closing of a certain period of life one may perceive the mistakes committed. The poet recalls the past. From the perspective of the years he notices the revolt against God and his sins. He considers that he has not fulfilled God’s expectations, favouring pleasure to prayer. Reflection comes only with the years but this allows him to find emotional balance and to change.

Within the structure of the poem Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd employs a continuation of traditional poetic canons with a decisive preference for the classical form (*ash-shi‘r al-‘amūdī*) and the preservation of the rules of metric and rhyming unity. Only in a few poems does the poet free himself from traditional form and bases it on foot (*taf‘īla*), rather than applying whole metre. Thanks to this he was able to undertake philosophical and existential subjects.

And so in the poem *Madā* (*Expanse*) he writes:

*I am still lost here
The time has come to end, here I will extinguish.
And burn my remains...*³⁶

³⁴ Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd, *Waladī*, in: *Min aghānī...*, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

³⁵ Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd, *Tawba*, in: *Min aghānī...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 83–84.

³⁶ Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd, *Madā*, in: *Min aghānī...*, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

The poet experiences dilemmas and states of depression. He feels isolated, misunderstood and unneeded. He clearly desires to depart, for the world is like a prison for him – one that restricts. He is unable to find his place amongst people and retreats into an isolation that leads him to breakdown and depression. The poem is an expression of the poet's reflection upon the frailty of fate, the uncertainty of plans and desires, their transitory nature and impermanence. There is no longer room for hope. All encompassing despair decides on the depressing mood of the entire work.

Creation is not only labour but also joy with the creation of a new reality. The poem by Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Ubayd *Qaṣīdatī al-akhīra* (*My Last Poem*) gives expression to the sensation of poetry:

*Oh my poem
I see you when the rain falls.
The smell of the earth ascends
And passion rises
[...]
Oh my poem
I see you as a child who smiles to the morning
And the dew smiles to him with its charming gaze
[...]
I see you when life sprouts forth
And I see a mother kissing her dead son who fell for the fatherland.³⁷*

The poet attempts to describe his poems and the process of their creation. His commentary is discreet and subtle, while at the same time touching the essential problems of man: his nature or sense of danger. The author tries to arrive with his heart at what is not comprehended by the mind.

The poetry of Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Ubayd is not the easiest to understand. The reader is asked to sharpen his wits in order to understand the message conveyed. His creative output is proof of refined taste. It draws with its strength of expression and the authenticity of the experiences described.

In the volume of poems *Ayna anta? (Where Are You?)* by 'Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī there dominates the classic Arab topic matter of love (*ghazal*) and patriotism (*waṭaniyyāt*). We come across in the romantic lyricism – both urban and Bedouin – couples in love, around whom legends gradually grew (for example, Qays ibn Mulaw-waḥ and Laylā). Poets described their lovers during romantic rendezvous and the pain of the accompanying parting. 'Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī clearly feels an enormous spiritual and literary bond with the creators of eras past. Already in the first poem, *Qaṭr*

³⁷ Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Ubayd, *Qaṣīdatī al-akhīra*, in: *Min aghānī...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 79–81.

an-nadā anti (*You Are a Drop of Dew*), the poet humbles himself before his beloved, paying her homage. He is enamoured by her beauty and suffers from longing:

*Oh you kiss of yearning, altar of my memory,
Holiness of my love, my tears speak to you
Did I forget about you, about the love of my sails?!
Let God fail to gladden my heart if I were to forget about you.*³⁸

He describes his immense yearning for his beloved, his family and his homeland in the subsequent poem *Laylā ma ‘dhira* (*I’m sorry, Laylā*):

*Ach, how hard it is for me with these tears, when memory brings me pain!
Parting has exhausted me, and yearning has wasted me.
Worry bears down on my shoulders, while sorrow
Is like a flood which overcomes me with pain.
[...]
Cry no more, for I am intoxicated with love.
One can see how I am dependent on longing. I am given over,
No one loves the fatherland and his compatriots like I do.*³⁹

Admiration, adoration of one’s beloved and her startling beauty are equally the subject in the work *Yā ‘adhābāt ar-rūḥ* (*Kind-hearted*) abounding in comparisons:

*I saw in you the beauty created by God.
Your beauty has no equals,
Your face is the dawn that illuminates the entire universe and its paradise.
[...]
You are a proud palm, you are the joy that brings hope,
You are the sun, the breath and the moon,
And waves of hair flow with the blackness of night on your shoulders.*⁴⁰

Crying which is a form of catharsis following the loss of a loved one is the title of the poem *Ayna anta?* (*Where Are you?*). From the *jāhiliyya* period (the pre-Muslim period) there is often reference to the beloved in the masculine gender:

*My eye does not rest, it still cries,
Tears following the loss of a beloved and sobs.
[...]
Oh my eyes, give me more tears for then I feel,
That I have a companion who relives me.
These tears are protection from loneliness and alienation
Their warmth heals me.*⁴¹

³⁸ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Qaṭr an-nadā anti*, in: *Ayna anta?*, Ra’s al-Khayma 2000, p. 1.

³⁹ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Laylā ma ‘dhira*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, pp. 6–7.

⁴⁰ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Yā ‘adhābāt ar-rūḥ*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, pp. 14–15.

⁴¹ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Ayna anta?*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī believes in love at first sight, something he emphasises in the poem *Mā sirr naẓratiki* (*What Is the Mystery of Your Gaze?*):

*I fell in love with you at first sight,
Furtively when you were amongst the listeners of poetry.
I saw you and love sparked between us,
And bore fruit in a platonic verse of love.*⁴²

A *qaṣīda* is often given the form of a *madīḥ*, that is the praising of virtues (for example, bravery, nobility). An example of a classic panegyric is the poem *Zāyd al-khayr* (*Zayd bringing well-being*):

*This sheikh is elevated in the garments of power,
Through determination he has reached the sun and the stars.
This is our Lord, for whom the law is just
He is a model, he enjoys authority and noble descent
[...]
He encouraged learning that enlightened the people,
He liberated the mind from ignorance and doubt.
He gave substructure to the federation [the state – author’s note]
And went further without fear of consequences.*⁴³

The work describes Sheikh Zāyd bin Sulṭān Al Niḥyān. The poet ensures that the name and deeds of the ruler will forever remain in the hearts of his compatriots. ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī draws attention to the Sheikh’s services for science, culture and the unity of all the emirates. We can find many personal accents within the poem. It seems as if the poet’s utterances came straight from the heart:

*All envy the land of the Emirates,
For the great leader who cares for it honestly.*⁴⁴

Sometimes the poet adds beneath long poems short several line *bayt* (two half poems) called *rashwa* (a gulp). As an example can serve the poem emphasising love for the fatherland:

*I am stricken by the fire of infatuation,
I am saturated with love for the fatherland to the point of pain.*⁴⁵

‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī does not forget about his roots, i.e. Ra’s al-Khayma, to which he devotes the poem *Hunā al-amjād* (*Here Lie Great Achievements*). He is very proud of his emirate, its inhabitants and the surrounding nature. He pays homage to his forefathers:

⁴² ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Mā sirr naẓratiki*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

⁴³ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Zayd al-khayr*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

⁴⁵ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Rashwa*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

*Ra ‘s al-Khayma enraptures people of various nations.
 In its hills live noble people and customs
 The earth and the planets speak loudly that here live
 Noble clans, courage and generosity
 [...]
 Our forebears are a model of dignity and glory for us.
 Let God protect you, for you are noble heroes.⁴⁶*

The author’s greatest love, one equal to his passion for women, is his homeland as expressed by the poem *Hiyā al-Imārāt* (*She is the Emirates*):

*You who ask me about the desires of the soul
 And about the woman who lives in my heart,
 About the love of my life –
 Who is she, in whose eyes I revel?
 She is the Emirates.
 Her love cannot be compared with anything.⁴⁷*

‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī is conscious of the role played by the word in Arab countries. Therefore it is through words that he expresses solidarity with the Palestinian and Iraqi peoples.

In the ode-like poem *Anīn Baghdād* (*The Groans of Baghdad*) the poet mourns the situation which resulted in the destruction of Baghdad in 1990 during the war in the Persian Gulf. He recalls the splendid history and culture of the city:

*Can Mesopotamia really not be ours?
 After all for centuries it afforded us protection
 [...]
 The legacy of Harun ar-Rashid is threatened
 With the bombardment carried out by murderers full of hate.
 [...]
 Oh my Arab nation, this is Iraq destroyed.⁴⁸
 [...]
 Oh my nation, return to Islam for this is the strength of our existence,
 It leads us on the correct route and is our mainstay.⁴⁹*

The poem *Awāhu yā ‘īd* (*Feast-Day*) deals with Palestinian matters and identifies with the Palestinian nation:

*Our children lost joy and laughter,
 We are expelled from our homes,*

⁴⁶ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Hunā al-amjād*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Hiyā al-Imārāt*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

⁴⁸ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Anīn Baghdād*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, pp. 84–85.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

*The earth groans, drinks the draff of pain
While the nation is scattered in exile.*⁵⁰

‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī is a national and general Arabic poet. His pan-Arabic thoughts are to be seen in the link emphasised by the author between the Arab countries, for example with Morocco in the poem *Ahl ar-Ribāṭ ahlān* (*Welcome, People of Rabat*):

Faith joins us, as equally the language dad [Arabic – author’s note]
And the bond of blood links us inseparably
*Our bond will remain and constitute a model for other nations.*⁵¹

All of ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī’s works refer in form to the classical Arab *qaṣīda* (*ash-shi’r al-‘amūdī*). Heated patriotism and a love of peace exude from the verse. The poet endowed with a specific sensitivity attempts through his poetry to simplify an understanding of the complex problems and conflicts of the modern world.

The poems of **Rahaf al-Mubārak** contained in the volume *Ayna qalbī...?* (*Where Is My Heart...?*) are thematically and emotionally varied in nature. They depict an individual outlook on the world and the poet’s independence of view.

In the poem *Yā ‘azīzī* (*Oh My Dear!*) the poet extols her bitterness following the break up with her beloved: unfulfillment, yearning, despair and sorrow. She unmasks the innerness of the soul and the desires lurking there:

Can a whole year already have passed since our first promise?
And you, my dear, still count the doves
And wait for longing to awaken
And emerge from beneath the rubble,
[...]
My heart, about which you care not,
Carries within it the wounds of all.
My dear, come close to me,
Embrace the sea of harmony and surrender
And tell me honestly whether your silence is inborn,
Or if you use it as a weapon of revenge?!⁵²

Unrequited love, yearning for the man beloved, the suffering awaiting a woman are the questions dealt with in the poem *‘Ashiq at-tirḥāl* (*In Love in Travels*):

You arrive and depart quickly, leaving a sorrow reminiscent of fire,
And the tears in my eyes are embroiled with the mysteries.

⁵⁰ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Awāhu yā ‘īd*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, pp. 111–112.

⁵¹ ‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī, *Ahl ar-Ribāṭ ahlān*, in: *Ayna anta?*, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

⁵² Rahaf al-Mubārak, *Yā ‘azīzī*, in: *Ayna qalbī...?*, Abū Zābī 2008, pp. 14–15.

*You arrive and depart quickly, and the trees passionately wait,
For when the boughs will bind.*⁵³

Subsequent poems by Rahaf al-Mubārak express the author’s enormous love for her homeland. In the poem *Mā zilta kabīran yā abati* (*You Are Still Great, My Father*) she praises all those who rule and all those who follow in the footsteps of the dead ruler of the Emirates, Zāyd:

*These are my Emirates, shower them with jewels and falcons,
Tell my homeland that I have already issued thousands of Zayds
Similar to Zayd in pride, generosity and feelings.*⁵⁴

At the same time the poet is proud that she belongs to Arab society:

*On my heart are inscribed letters full of love
To the fatherland, most beloved, to Arabs and Islam.*⁵⁵

There is also no absence of panegyrics in Rahaf al-Mubārak’s work. In the poem *Amīr al-anām* (*The Prince of All People*) she praises the life and work of the Prophet Muḥammad:

*Orphaned, kind-hearted from the tribe of Quraysh.
His face is speckled with the dew of flowers,
Even the hearts of the mountains are favourably disposed to him,
While over him float the clouds of heaven.
Ahmad came... Oh Mecca, this is good news:
The Prince of dew and pride has come to you.*⁵⁶

In a further part of the poem the poetess condemns the drawing in Europe of caricatures ridiculing the prophet of Islam:

*They prepared for Ahmad evil,
Woe be to them who desired to defame an honest man!
Let the arm that painted my Lord wither,
The Prince of all peoples.*⁵⁷

An interpretation of Rahaf al-Mubārak’s poetry allows us to conclude that the poetess dreams of breaking with bothersome reality. She desires to free herself from the daily sorrows and dilemmas that painfully wound. She is not able to act decisively. Discouragement has so enveloped her soul that she is unable to revive herself. She clings to suffering even though this is unpleasant. Her work makes reference to Arab tradition and culture.

⁵³ Rahaf al-Mubārak, ‘*Āshiq at-tirḥāl*, in: *Ayna qalbī...?*, op.cit., p. 16.

⁵⁴ Rahaf al-Mubārak, *Mā zilta kabīran yā abati*, in: *Ayna qalbī...?*, op.cit., p. 39.

⁵⁵ Rahaf al-Mubārak, *Ilā al-tadhī asmathu ummuhu Sa’dī fā’shqāhā!*, in: *Ayna qalbī...?*, op.cit., p. 20.

⁵⁶ Rahaf al-Mubārak, *Amīr al-anām*, in: *Ayna qalbī...?*, op.cit., p. 30.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

A poetess exceptionally involved in the daily affairs of her country and the larger Arab world is **Jawriyya al-Khāja**, who in the slim volume *Ṣahīl ar-rūḥ* (*The Whinnying of the Soul*) undertakes a patriotic theme in the *waṭaniyyāt* (patriotic) verses. Particularly characteristic for this volume are the poems pronouncing love for the homeland, for example *al-Khayl ta 'dū* (*The Horse Gallops*):

*The roots of our unification... lie deep in the earth
Now it is strong... like mighty trees.
Our homeland in its beautiful shape
Is a gift of God... And he is generous.*⁵⁸

Al-Khāja values freedom, therefore the Palestinian matter is considered to be one of the most important for Arabs. Many of them in a way similar to her are disillusioned by the lack of progress in resolving the conflict. In the poem *Wa yasquṭ al-kalām* (*Let the Words Fall*) she does not spare Arab leaders from criticism for their passivity and silence over Palestine:

*Death is our unwanted guest,
It chokes us.
We no longer fear the wolves or the Jews,
We are afraid of God alone.*⁵⁹

In a subsequent poem, *Yā rabbat al-amjād* (*About the Goddess of Height*), she presents the view that the Arabs are helpless:

*We stood with bounty under the fangs of the enemies,
Despising us.
Who has won Jerusalem, who will defend our country?!
Who will bring us hope, who will listen to the voice of reason?*⁶⁰

Yawm aṣ-ṣidām (*The Day of Struggle*) is a call to the Arabs for *jihād* – struggle with its enemies. For the greatest responsibility for each and every Muslim is to choose between one's own good and that of the homeland:

*The just God calls to battle,
So we will go to fight!
Glory is written into our Koran,
It is the illumination that banishes the dark.
Rise up like lions amongst the people
And crawl amongst the darkness!*⁶¹

⁵⁸ Jawriyya al-Khāja, *al-Khayl ta 'dū*, in: *Ṣahīl ar-rūḥ*, Dubayy 1999, p. 57.

⁵⁹ Jawriyya al-Khāja, *Wa yasquṭ al-kalām*, in: *Ṣahīl ar-rūḥ*, op.cit., p. 13.

⁶⁰ Jawriyya al-Khāja, *Yā rabbat al-amjād*, in: *Ṣahīl ar-rūḥ*, op.cit., p. 22.

⁶¹ Jawriyya al-Khāja, *Yawm aṣ-ṣidām*, in: *Ṣahīl ar-rūḥ*, op.cit., pp. 137–138.

On the one hand the poetess is calling one not to cry and despair, while in another part of the poem she weeps tears over Palestine's situation:

*I cry over a longing for Palestine.
Oh you, the sad voice of our widows,
In this dusk our breathes
Are full of bitterness and depression.*⁶²

The poem concludes, however, with optimistic messages. The poet refers to the Arabs' magnificent past, recalling the great Abbasids caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd and the leader Khālīd ibn al-Walīd:

*Attack
Doggedly forward!
Fight like the sword of al-Walīd,
Maybe the good old days will return.*⁶³

The title of the last poem in the volume, *Judhūr ash-sharr* (*The Roots of Evil*), relates to the text of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Jawriyya al-Khāja urges a rejection of evil and concentration on the performance of good:

*So cut the roots of evil,
For the earth can stand it no longer.
Let our meadows blossom with good
And the love smell of flowers.*⁶⁴

The past must not only be accepted but also can and should constitute a lesson for the future. The poetess through her output desires to discover the sense and lasting value of existence. She clearly opposes passivity. Her critical look at the Arabs is derived from a sense of responsibility for their fate and future. The poetry of Jawriyya al-Khāja written in a classical language in the forms: *al-'amūdī* (one rhyme and rhythm) and *taf'īla* (one metric foot), can be difficult in reception.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 141.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 142.

⁶⁴ Jawriyya al-Khāja, *Judhūr ash-sharr*, in: *Ṣahīl ar-rūh*, *op.cit.*, p. 145.

Chapter II

The Development of Modern Emirate Poetry (*at-taf'ila*)

A common feature of many Arab poets of the new school is the often or complete breaking with the form of the traditional monorhyme and monorhythmic *qaṣīda*. They started to create free verse based on a single foot (*taf'ila*), as opposed to applying a whole metre, and rhythm (*iqā'*).

Free verse (*taf'ila*) is written in the United Arab Emirates by: Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, Karīm Ma'tūq, Aḥmad Rashīd Thānī, Khulūd al-Mu'allā, Nāṣir Jubrān, 'Alī al-Sha'ālī.

Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm belongs to the most eminent of contemporary Emirate poets. His poetic sensitivity enables him to combine various motifs, though avoiding literary compromise at the same time. All the poems contained in the volume *aṭ-Ṭarīq ilā ra's at-tall* (*The Route to the Hill's Top*) exude deep-rooted patriotism. The title poem has been divided into parts (*mashhad*), in which the poet manipulates images of loss:

*I lost direction,
I lost the road
To the hut standing at the top of the hill.
I lost a wing,
While my legs disappear amongst the crowd.*⁶⁵

The poet appears as an excellent observer of social behaviour, hence his poem *Mashhad at-tih* (*A Labyrinth Scene*) deals with a difficult subject connected with the loss of beloved friends who left him alone and left:

*I myself touch the walls of my years,
Share with them my loss,
While they share with me silence,
They care for me
After separations with those beloved
And cruel, who drank from my chalice
And departed...*⁶⁶

The subject of the next poem is alienation, a lover and separation:

⁶⁵ Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, *Mashhad at-tih*, in: *aṭ-Ṭarīq ilā ra's at-tall*, ash-Shāriqa 2002, p. 12.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

*He left.
His bundle is the route,
His direction is the centre of the universe.
His she-camel is the wind,
His star is the heart,
His boots are the earth,
And forehead the sky.*⁶⁷

On his journey he is accompanied by sorrow:

*I am leaving –
Not like the other travellers.
You have abandoned sorrow,
You desire sorrow...
For it and out of it you create the joy of the soul.*⁶⁸

This poem represents its own form of manifestation of the poet's identity. It emphasises his origins and tradition, which impose upon him concrete responsibilities. He must be a righteous man. Further on in the text the author broaches the question of connections with the homeland and the Palestinian struggle. He accentuates the important place occupied by Jerusalem:

*"Here is Jerusalem"
All patriotic elites expressed their sorrow
At the collapse of peace
And the monument to Buddha,
And the nerves of the settlers in Hebron and Gaza.*⁶⁹

Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm expresses his opposition to the settling of Palestinian lands by Jewish settlers. The poem *ad-Durra qāla* (*ad-Durra Said*) is confessional in nature. It relates to the Palestinian struggle and recalls the figure of the peasant Muḥammad ad-Durra, who was murdered by Israeli soldiers during the second revolution called *Intifāḍa al-Aqṣā* (as a result of the defence of the al-Aqṣā mosque in Jerusalem). The poet wants to present the immortality of the peasant for posterity and to carve with words a poetic monument, which will occupy a lasting place in the memory of Arabs:

*Each has his moment of glory,
Who gets to know the mystery of Jerusalem
Amidst the first shots.
The universe disappeared,
I was
A witness.
And when the firing hushed,*

⁶⁷ Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, *Rahīl fī taḍārīs al-ghurba wa al-'ishq*, in: *aṭ-Ṭarīq ilā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

*The universe took my place,
I carried my time
And moved on further.*⁷⁰

The poet also does not ignore the murdering carried out by the Israeli military in the Jinīn refugee camp on the West Bank:

*At the distance of a single heartbeat
And the blinking of an eye
Jinīn sleeps
Like rubble from eternal exhaustion.
Sleeps on its eternal love.
With the small of death acovering.
Hair is dishevelled,
Lips dusty,
Shreds of shirts
Cover the skulls of children.*⁷¹

In the poem *Jinīn* the poet underlines the sensual bond linking him with Palestine. The eyes of imagination perceive the suffering of its inhabitants. He desires to draw attention to the still unsolved Palestinian problem, entering into the retinue of poets who have fought with the pen:

*Oh Palestine, oh star of my sky,
Oh my revolution,
Oh volcano which attacks under my water;
Oh you, the mystery of my heart.*⁷²

Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm presents us with love for the soil and the fatherland in the poem *ar-Rijāl al-‘anīdūn (Obstinant Men)*:

(4)
*I call you my love,
And they called you the land of gold.
I am touched by your drama,
They achieved their aim.
My fault that I am
In love,
And your fault
That you are the land of the Arabs.*⁷³

The poet appears as a patriot, loving his land and country:

⁷⁰ Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, *ad-Durra qāla*, in: *aṭ-Ṭarīq ilā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

⁷¹ Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, *Jinīn*, in: *aṭ-Ṭarīq ilā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 94.

⁷³ Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, *ar-Rijāl al-‘anīdūn*, in: *aṭ-Ṭarīq ilā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

(8)

*My country is a part of the universe,
In it snuggle genii,
While people of various races live in harmony
You do not sense here strangeness.⁷⁴*

Another poem is reflection upon the world, the life of people, the struggle of good and evil:

(14)

*All the doors are closed
Except the door of evil.
The world is flooded
The peasant hugs his seedling,
There is no land.⁷⁵*

The poetic language of Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm is concise. He strikes with the aptness of his formulations and play on meanings. This is moving poetry, one that arouses reflection. The poet draws the recipient's attention to the great value that is attachment to one's homeland and the willingness to give one's life for it. For patriotism constitutes a timeless and unique value, it arouses respect and prompts one to emotions.

The poetess **Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh** is one of the best known female poets from the United Arab Emirates. Her poetry often has a personal lyrical character. Certain works reflect the author's views on life and the place of man in the contemporary world. They are an expression of her independence in the face of modern trends in the art of the word and modesty in her evaluation of her own literary output.

The volume *Bī-īntiẓār ash-shams* (*Waiting for the Sun*) comprises poems written for the years 1985–1992. Within Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh's poetic vision, man is marked by the indelible brand of the past. For the author, as an individual bestowed with talent and sensitivity, sees more than ordinary mortals. In her poems history and tradition come together with contemporariness. Everything undergoes constant change and development. The poetess feels sorrow for the passing of time. She is a witness to the changes which are occurring before her eyes. She, her nearest and dearest writhe and unwillingly succumb to the laws that rule the world. They cannot oppose the force that keeps us on the treadmill of everyday problems and matters. We are all a particle of history and should not live for but a moment. In order to fix her name for posterity, Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh writes poems praising God:

*In my heart splash the letters of love
[...]*

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁷⁵ Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, *Sullam li-n-nuzūl faqat*, in: *aṭ-Ṭarīq ilā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

*I whisper that I love you, my God.*⁷⁶

God is the only saviour, he is able to guarantee man solace and a sense of safety. In the poem *Mā dumta ma 'ī* (*While You Are With Me*) the poet professes:

*While you are with me,
I see no faces but yours,
No shadow accompanies me,
But the one painted around me by your sun.
[...]
And if my strength deserts me
And I leave it,
There remains your hands,
Oh my Lord...
This means that I only love you.*⁷⁷

Despite the fact that man is separated from God by an enormous expanse, he can always count on wisdom, love and justice. The poet's verses are full of understanding and love for people, the world and nature.

Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh is involved in the matters of Arab society, particularly those of the Persian Gulf. The poem *Hunā fī al-Khalīj* (*Here in the Gulf*), was written in 1991, that is after the end of the first Gulf War. The poet shows what system of values people should profess in order to protect them from the threats that are brought by the contemporary world. She understands the civilizational and cultural processes and considers them essential to shape one's own relations to oneself and to one's fellow man:

*Here in the Gulf
The sun rise has the magnitude of love,
The earth is as enormous as a mother's warmth
[...]
Is this the water of the Gulf,
Is this the pearl that cannot be had
[...]
Are these the waters of the Gulf?
Why is its purity destroyed?
This is the man of the Gulf,
They say of him that prosperity has held him at bay,
He sleeps in a bed of silk.
[...]
The man of this Gulf
Is a being that does not close the door to love.*⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Aḥruf al-ḥubb*, in: *Bi-intizār ash-shams*, ash-Shāriqa 1992, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Mā dumta ma 'ī*, in: *Alān 'arāfu*, al-Qāhira 1999, pp. 65–71.

⁷⁸ Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Hunā fī al-Khalīj*, in: *Bi-intizār...*, *op.cit.*, p. 17–25.

In this long poem she shows the faces of the countries of the Gulf, their traditions and modernity, vices and virtues, prosperity and the defeat of war. The inhabitants of the Gulf still respect their own past, continue their traditions, but are also quickly adapting themselves to the new reality.

The main subject of the next volume of Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh's poetry, *Alān 'arāftu* (*Now, I Know*) is the sense of being lost, of loneliness, alienation, suffering and sorrow.

The poet is an exceptionally sensitive individual, inclined to reflection, but at the same time exceptionally secretive. Only in the face of the Creator does she expose her helplessness and bitterly felt loneliness:

*You cuddle a dream standing alone,
You recite sorrow – a book which suddenly renews itself.*⁷⁹

The cause of the limitless sorrow is the cruel age in which the poetess has come to live:

*This is a time which cannot show love.
You have to adopt for yourself another form,
Which is obtained for you from the bottle of suppressed verse.*⁸⁰

Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh sees no perspective before her. She does not find support in the hitherto accepted values, those previously considered important. Religion and philosophy as well as all forms of scientific investigations have turned out to be insufficient for this generation. They did not give answers to questions on the sense and meaning of life and did not protect one from sorrow, fear and loneliness. In the poem *Waḥda* (*Loneliness*) we read:

*The hand of the wind,
Which moves the handle
Is like the melody of a brutal silence
That gives the spark moving in the "ego".*⁸¹

Loneliness takes on various forms, like for instance in the poem *Man dhā yaṣīruki?! (Who Stands Before You?!):*

*There is no one here but me
I dress in my loneliness and its beautiful ceremonies.*⁸²

A yearning for one's beloved is equally the subject of poetic reflection in the poem *Shawq* (*Yearning*) that appears in the volume *al-Marāyā laysat hiyā* (*The Mirrors Are Not Her*):

*Twilight falls
Behind the fog of my expectations*

⁷⁹ Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Qāmatun ukhrā*, in: *Alān 'arāftu*, op.cit., p. 38.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

⁸¹ Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Waḥda*, in: *Alān 'arāftu*, op.cit., p. 23.

⁸² Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Man dhā yaṣīruki?!*, in: *Alān 'arāftu*, op.cit., p. 31.

*And leaves me.
In its remainders
I light the silence of the yearning for you.*⁸³

The moods of sorrow, disencouragement, endless torment, which becomes a monotony similar to constantly driving rain, is reflected in the poem *Ḥikāyat al-maṭar* (*A Story of Rain*). The poet magnificently constructs mood through the application of suggestive images, excellently captured emotions, repetitions:

*The rain is exile
[...]
The rain is a woman
[...]
The rain is a song
[...]
The rain is poetry and the poet.*⁸⁴

*Have you seen when it rains,
When the sky floods all,
That it carries inside,
The earth mutters in sorrow,
And the roads choke.
However later
The earth becomes a place for the diving of green pearls.
Today I am so:
Sad,
But I am blooming.*⁸⁵

The lyrical I expresses existential sorrow, feels lonely and estranged. For it seems that in a way the poem constitutes its own form of summing up of the synthesis of life, a view from a distance on loneliness and poetry. The poetess in a masterly way conveys the mood of the moment. The poem should be considered a form of personal lyricism.

The poetry of Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh constitutes its own chapter in the history of Emirate literature as a consequence of its thematic variety. The poetess introduces into her poetry invigorated and original elements which serve her in describing the spiritual state, feelings or the perception of reality by a man desiring to free himself from worrying thoughts. The lyrical I searches for solace in a contemplation of the beauty that is nature. The poet's verse is an example of romantic lyricism in which there appears an interaction between the spiritual state of the subject of the lyrical hero and the nature that surrounds him. Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh pays attention to the rhythmic and melodious aspects of the work, hence she utilises various types of poem: from poems with rhythm and rhyme (or without rhyme) *tafʿīla* through to poetry in prose (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*).

⁸³ Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Shawq*, in: *al-Marāyā laysat hiyā*, ash-Shāriqa 1997, p. 14.

⁸⁴ Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Ḥikāyat al-maṭar*, in: *Alān 'arāftu*, *op.cit.*, pp. 40–42.

⁸⁵ Ṣāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Mā ba'd al-maṭar*, in: *al-Marāyā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

Şāliḥa Ghābīsh has divided the volume *al-Marāyā laysat hiyā* (*Mirrors Are Not Her*) into two parts. Within the series of poems *Min dafātīr dāi'a*. (1 wa 2) (*Lost Notebooks* (1 and 2)) she applies various rhythmic feet (*taf'ila*).

The lyrical I of the poem *Ilayka qahwatī* (*Coffee for You*) and *'Atash al-qamḥ* (*The Yearning of the Grain*) feels lonely. It spins reflections, it observes reality and attempts to define its place in the world:

*Oh my comrade, I am still
A woman in love with,
When the moon smiles.
I am one of those women,
Who leaves their tents carefully,
Fearing the city full of sand,
Words and ill thoughts....*⁸⁶

Human life is not only a series of joyous moments, but it is also full of sorrow and melancholy. It is man himself who complicates the world. In the face of the peace and freedom of nature, man appears as a primitive being, acting against his own nature, limiting his freedoms, unable to use the world around him.

A special place is taken up in the volume by the short poem *Mujarrad kalām* (*These Are Only Words*). The poet does not suggest nor even hint, she simply declares that poetry does not have many readers, but this in no way affects her judgement and does not prejudice her evaluation.

*Who to sell my words to?
And who will buy them...
All the words that deserted silence,
Broke down.*⁸⁷

The poem – as one may assume – concludes that poetry cannot be precisely defined even though many have undertaken the labour. The said indefinability of poetry has meant that it is always attractive. In addition it is not subjected to any influences. It does not submit itself to current vogues. It is disinterested and uncompromised. Thanks to its independence it should be a measure of truth and a mainstay of moral principles.

An attempt at deepening the sense of life is undertaken by **Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī** in the poems of the volume *Munākkhāt ūlā* (*The First Gifts*). The world horrifies the poet, in a similar way to how people misunderstand the depth of his soul. He is unable to find a place for himself and consequently disappears into isolation on the shore of his beloved sea – presented as an unsubdued element, cursed, luring the lonely and rebellious. Sometimes it has a mystical dimension, while the symbolism of the departing ships touches

⁸⁶ Şāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Ilayka qahwatī*, in: *al-Marāyā*..., *op.cit.*, p. 28.

⁸⁷ Şāliḥa Ghābīsh, *Mujarrad kalām*, in: *al-Marāyā*..., *op.cit.*, p. 14.

on the mystery of distancing, a crossing over to the other side, to another, non-human world. For *the symbolic function of the sea in the Koran has led to – besides stereotypical metaphors – the allegory of “two seas”... heaven and hell.*⁸⁸

Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī is far from comprehending the sea in a classical way. In the poem *an-Najma wa al-baḥr* (*The Star and the Sea*) the ship appears as a lover that is caressed by the sea. The poet submits the ship and the sea to a measure of animatism conveying on them psychic properties so as to finally present them as a pair of lovers. The sea waves represent also peace and solace, thanks to which man is able to relax and – conceivably – be reborn anew. The element of water brings with it also cleansing.

(3)

*We have drunk from a single sea
And have become...*⁸⁹

The poem is divided into parts, which allow one to concentrate on a concrete theme. Love, childhood, and even death are mutually interwoven. The title star is a guide that shows the way. The star into which stare the eyes of the romantic lover also constitutes a specific element of the night sky. For the poet it becomes a confidante and to which he raises his calls:

(4)

*Oh star! How I long for..?*⁹⁰

The poet does not finish this utterance, but is forced to seek its sense and meaning in subsequent lines:

(5)

*How much I fear the radiation
Of the sun that blind my eyes,
Even though I yearn for it!*⁹¹

On the one hand the poet fears love and the suffering it brings with it, on the other hand, however, he does not hesitate in sacrificing his life for his beloved:

(6)

*I would like to die in the breast of my beloved.*⁹²

This love is interwoven in the works of Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī which is at the same time the feelings of a patriot combining a strong bond with his country:

(8)

*My mother is the earth, come, embrace me!*⁹³

⁸⁸ Marek Dziekan, *Symbolika arabsko-muzułmańska: mały słownik*, Warszawa 1997, p. 68.

⁸⁹ Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *an-Najma wa al-baḥr*, in: *Munākhāt ūlā*, ash-Shāriqa 1996, p. 6.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

⁹² *Ibidem*.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

(9)

*My beloved plays in the embraces of her mother;
And I wait for her until she grows.*⁹⁴

In the poem *an-Najma wa al-baḥr* (*The Star and the Sea*) love appears not only as a relationship to a cherished individual, but also as an attitude towards one's fatherland and the world in general. This form of feeling is characterised by responsibility and respect. The internally torn lyrical I discovers the sense to life in love for the fatherland and to his beloved.

In reading the poem *Imnaḥinī faqaṭ lawn 'aynayki* (*Give Me Only the Colour of Your Eyes*), it is difficult not to deny the impression that the poet has seen in the sea also a symbol of his beloved homeland:

*Here is the sea,
Loses its map –
The sea flows into my heart [...].
And I create the sea,
The incoming tide
And the daybreak,
And the storm.*⁹⁵

The image of the sea is a reflection of the poet's emotional state, which he is unable to free from thoughts of the fatherland. His beloved country is for him equally proof of pride, as well as being a source of anxiety.

Sleep symbolises the world and the arcana of life,⁹⁶ it is a period of a changeable state of consciousness, which allows one to tackle problems and thoughts. It is a chance for a return to the past:

*Night resurrects the sorrow,
Eyes stare afar.
I close my eyelids,
And try to move backwards.*⁹⁷

It seems that the poet is not sure himself as to whether he sleeps or is dreaming while awake. He talks with his beloved, returns to jointly shared moments. These memories arouse in the lyrical I positive feelings:

*We have jointly painted all of our dreams...
When I sleep, your face pulsates
In my blood like the dawn.*⁹⁸

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵ Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *Imnaḥinī faqaṭ lawn 'aynayki*, in: *Munākhāt ūlā*, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁹⁶ Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik symboli*, Warszawa 1990, p. 367.

⁹⁷ Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *Hulm*, in: *Munākhāt ūlā*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 68.

The lyrical I and his beloved have immense feelings. They have had common dreams, out of which little remains except for memories. The poet retreats into solitude, which intensifies in him the feeling of depression and sorrow. There appear in the poem the motif of human life depicted as a lonely wandering, that is accompanied by love, separation, recollections and solitude.

The volume is summed up by al-Hāshimī himself in the afterword at the end of the collection: *The poems were written in another time than this [...] with another pen [...] and another heart.*⁹⁹

In 2000 Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī published two collections of poetry in one volume. They are entitled *Qalaq* (Anxiety) and *Tafāṣīl* (Details) and were written in the 1990s in Damascus, Dubai and Amman. The poet expresses in them his concern and sense of being loss.

Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī is conscious of the flow of time. He returns in his memories to the years of his childhood. He recalls events, people, friends:

*My heart shudders,
The doors to my childhood open.
When will you come to me, oh friends?
Before me moments of joy and gloom shoot past.
There flashes in your eyes an age,
Which was still full of fidelity
For an eternity.*¹⁰⁰

The poem is a search for one's very self, for one's identity. The poet knows that childhood and youth have been irreversibly lost, but not wasted. Together with his friends he has always served the fatherland, been conscious of his duties, for the good of the nation more than once brings with it sacrifice – it requires devotion and loyalty.

There is no absence in al-Hāshimī's verse of concern for one's fellow man, particularly one suffering. This is why he dedicates his poem to the Palestinian people *Dhākira* (Memory):

*Rain fell on the clay.
Let God protect Palestine,
Palestine is our homeland...*¹⁰¹

The work was written in a simple accessible language, referring also to the chorus of a song sung by children in dialect. The author formulates his message directly and forcefully. This combination of simplicity and loftiness is forceful in expression.

The volume of poetry *Tafāṣīl* (Details) contains short poems which appear as the poet's thoughts, and concern the subjects of the love and loneliness that have been addressed in other volumes:

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁰ Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *al-Aṣḍiqā'*, in: *Qalaq*, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁰¹ Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *Dhākira*, in: *Qalaq*, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

Evening
*Ceremonies of unrest.*¹⁰²

For this Bedouin
*The clouds of the heart.*¹⁰³

Oh voice of love,
From whence have you come?
From the very centre of the heart
*Or heartbeat.*¹⁰⁴

In the poem *Qalam (The Pen)* Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī attempts to define what exactly is poetry, what is its source. The author emphasises that the creation of poetry is no easy matter. It is often paid for by suffering and limitations:

Imagine for yourself that you are
A pencil.
You will learn how terrible is
*The sound of a pencil sharpener.*¹⁰⁵

Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī's poetry is comprehensively finished off. All the various elements of its composition combine perfectly: the melody of the poems, the vocabulary, the image of nature, the light, the sound and movement, ensuring a sensual synaesthesia. Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī's work makes intellectual demands on the reader.

Love for the fatherland, involvement in the affairs of the Arab world, separation, sorrow and glory for leaders are the main motifs in the poetry of **Karīm Ma'tūq** that appears in the volume *A 'ṣāb as-sukkar (Sweet Nerves)*.

Already the first poem of the volume, *Al-fikra al-bikr (Chief Thought)*, is an expression of the poet's pride in being an inhabitant of the Emirates:

These are the Emirates, have you seen
*A homeland as beautiful as the moon.*¹⁰⁶

Committed poetry (*multazima*) he continues in the cycle of songs *Mawāwīl Dīsim-bir (December Songs)*. Each fragment is written in classical verse with its rhythm and rhyme:

Oh fatherland, whose courage is transferred from generation to generation,
Every just man and traveller says so

¹⁰² Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *al-Masā'...*, in: *Tafāṣīl*, ash-Shāriqa 2000, p. 43.

¹⁰³ Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *Qalb...*, in: *Tafāṣīl*, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁴ Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *Dabīb*, in: *Tafāṣīl*, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁵ Ibrāhīm al-Hāshimī, *Qalam*, in: *Tafāṣīl*, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁶ Karīm Ma'tūq, *Al-fikra al-bikr*, in: *A 'ṣāb as-sukkar*, [n.d., n.p.] p. 3.

*Oh my homeland! Each who left you,
Returned, crawling to your soil.*¹⁰⁷

In the next song the author recalls the holiday of Emirate unity, which is celebrated on the 2nd of December every year:

*I welcomed them on their holiday
To be heard of in every corner of the world.*¹⁰⁸

In the poem *Mawt mu'aqqat (Temporary Death)* Karīm Ma'tūq calls for vigilance and unity for the Arab world. He wants to act, as opposed to all the Arabs who only cry over the ruins of the past. Karīm Ma'tūq refers to the pre-Muslim qasadi of the poet Imrū'l-Qays:

*I am the orphaned rhymes of Arabness.
I have nothing in common with the ruins,
To cry over Saqt al-Liwa,*¹⁰⁹
*But I bow my forehead before all those who fell,
So that the fatherland might arise.*¹¹⁰

In a further part of the poem the poet turns with feeling to Baghdad, the Lebanon and Jerusalem. He writes about solidarity with other Arab countries:

*I saw broken Baghdad,
I stared at broken Lebanon,
I gazed on the road to Jerusalem,
which does not lead to you.
[...]
How poems lie during wars
How sincere are sorrows during wars.*¹¹¹

He also condemns those who led to the destruction of Iraq most likely referring to the Gulf War. In the poem *Taghayyara al-fath (Conquest Changed)* he accuses Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, who rather than fight for a free Palestine, invaded a brother Arab state in the form of Kuwait:

*Watch out! They distort their own history.
Do not be naive and prepare yourself for troubles.
They waste your art, which we know well:
Poetry, prose and the long history of literature.*

¹⁰⁷ Karīm Ma'tūq, *Mawāwīl Dīsimbir*, in: *A'ṣāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁹ Saqt al-Liwa – place name mentioned by Imrū'l-Qays in his qasīda:
*Stand up! Let us cry over the memory of the beloved
At Saqt al-Liwa, between Haumal and ad-Dakhul.*
(translation: B. Michalak-Pikulska)

¹¹⁰ Karīm Ma'tūq, *Mawt mu'aqqat*, in: *A'ṣāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

*Baghdad has become only pain,
While in it your palms already do not bear lush fruit
Baghdad has become the praise
Of hatred towards Arabs and Islam.*¹¹²

The poet tries several times in the volume to refer to poetic narrative. His poems often remind one of a story, for example *Qiṣṣat Mūsā (Musa's Story)* which relates to social problems, broaching the question of the role of women in Arab society. He describes a man whose wife only gives birth to girls. The poet shows that Laylā still inhabits a backward society where everyone, and particularly women, has a designated stereotypical role to play and is evaluated by society in relation to this role. In this case the author does not commend such a situation and ironically persuades the man to take another wife who will be able to give him a son:

*Laylā gives birth only to girls.
Marry again and you'll have a son,
Who will carry your name and inherit what you own.*¹¹³

A motif often undertaken in Arabic literature is respect for the mother. There is after all an Arabic saying that states: *Paradise lies at the feet of a mother*. Karīm Ma'tūq in the poem *al-Umm (Mother)* emphasises the exceptional role of the parent:

*A mother is a school – so they say – and I also repeat this,
That all schools pay homage to her.
I dedicate poems to her,
But really I am unable to say in words who is a mother.
Even if I were to write a poem about her,
The poetry would admit that it is unable to convey in words what she deserves.*¹¹⁴

Poems on the subject of love are based on a single foot – *taf'ila* – instead of a whole metre. An example could be the poem *Fī al-maqhā (In the Cafe)*:

*Let's imagine an end:
This is the very funeral of love.
Here we will bury it,
Wrap it in a shroud of memories and we shall read with the Fātiḥa with feeling.*¹¹⁵

Karīm Ma'tūq talks about love with great expression: he is enraptured, sighs, loves, suffers, fights with himself and succumbs to passion. He painstakingly gives himself over to feelings. There are here many declarations, raptures and flushes of the heart all described with the help of carefully selected artistic resources. Love in the poem *al-Wahm al-jamīl (The Beautiful Phantom)* is an illusion for the lyrical I:

¹¹² Karīm Ma'tūq, *Taghayyara al-faṭḥ*, in: *A'ṣāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 123.

¹¹³ Karīm Ma'tūq, *Qiṣṣat Mūsā*, in: *A'ṣāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹¹⁴ Karīm Ma'tūq, *al-Umm*, in: *A'ṣāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

¹¹⁵ Karīm Ma'tūq, *Fī al-maqhā*, in: *A'ṣāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 54 (*Fātiḥa* – the shortest sura that opens the Koran).

*I was your last lover
I was your favourite poet.*¹¹⁶

There dominates within love lyricism the motifs of separation, sorrow and the cruelty of love associated with them:

*Sorrow draws sorrow,
Eternal despair... fear.
Sufferings are falseness,
While the hues of melancholy unity.
[...]
Not always do love stories end
With red and white roses
Or olive branches or the piteousnesses of doves.*¹¹⁷

We can observe total submission to the beloved in the poem *Wāḥat al- wajh* (*The Oasis of the Face*). The lyrical I is presented as a powerless being in the face of the feeling that has overpowered him:

*Oh you my beloved, alien and mysterious,
You are an enemy and friend in one.
With you I have created the story of passion,
And tomorrow your love will be my story.*¹¹⁸

Despite the fact that the majority of Karīm Maʿtūq's poems take the form of the classic *qaṣīda ash-shiʿr al-ʿamūdī*, the poet does not ignore other poetic forms of expression, for example with *tafʿīla*. Maʿtūq, endowed with a specific sensitivity, he desires to help understand the difficult problems of his era.

He recalls with nostalgia and warmth his childhood in the collection of poetry *Tufūla* (*Childhood*), which is comprised of twelve image poems (*lawḥa*). All are based on rhyme and metre (*tafʿīla*).

The poet evaluates the significance of childhood for the subsequent stages of our life. He presents them using evaluating determiners. He points out the significance of adolescence in shaping one's personality. Lightness, subtlety, charm and grace are the most important characteristics of childhood. In another image poem (*al-Lawḥa ath-thāniya*) we read:

*When we were small,
Waves protected the isle.
Then we did not fear cold
Or heat.
And when night came, they frightened us with the words: The bogeyman¹¹⁹ will come soon –*

¹¹⁶ Karīm Maʿtūq, *al-Wahm al-jamīl*, in: *Aʿšāb...*, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

¹¹⁷ Karīm Maʿtūq, *al-Firāq al-jamīl*, in: *Aʿšāb...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 99–100.

¹¹⁸ Karīm Maʿtūq, *Wāḥat al- wajh*, in: *Aʿšāb...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 113–116.

¹¹⁹ In the original Umm Adwīs is a dark character from a folk fairytale that tells of a woman who steals children at night.

*But he did not come.
Sometimes sorrow paid a call.*

*And despair embraced us...
And when they told us that a genie would come,
We were cautious,
We were not afraid...*¹²⁰

The poem is a poetic transfer in time to the kingdom of childhood. This image, in a similar way to the next, is a sign of the attitude of a grown man who is able to draw stimulants from the treasure trove of his experiences. The language of the texts refers to the emotional sphere, at times completely magical. He introduces the climate of the past. The poet freely uses punctuation. With the help of multiple dots he achieves an effect of mystery and openness thought which numerous additional recollections of time past may be supplemented.

In the fourth picture (*al-Lawḥa ar-rābi'a*) he points out changes in the situation and mentality of people:

*When we were small,
The sands of the sea served the human good
[...]
They were completely different from now
One can sense the taste of anxiety in our hearts.*¹²¹

The twelfth image (*al-Lawḥa ath-thāni 'ashra*) draws attention to the period of childhood as an exceptional time, one important for the development of man and the shaping of his personality at a mature age:

*I was then ten years old,
Concord and harmony ruled between people.
And now, when I am old,
I already know how many suffered from a lack of love.*¹²²

The lyrical I undertakes the question of the passing of things beautiful, lofty, transitory. One may keep them in one's memory in order to retain for the rest of one's life at least a few remnants of childhood. They are a source of emotions. In the fourteenth image (*al-Lawḥa ar-rābi'a 'ashra*) he states:

*A palm is like man:
It gives birth to little palms,
Which give fruit.*¹²³

¹²⁰ Karīm Ma'tūq, *al-Lawḥa ath-thāniya*, in: *Tufūla*, ash-Shāriqa 1992, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

¹²¹ Karīm Ma'tūq, *al-Lawḥa ar-rābi'a*, in: *Tufūla*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

¹²² Karīm Ma'tūq, *al-Lawḥa ath-thāni 'ashra*, in: *Tufūla*, *op.cit.*, pp. 81–82.

¹²³ Karīm Ma'tūq, *al-Lawḥa ar-rābi'a 'ashra*, in: *Tufūla*, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

The whole volume of Karīm Ma'tūq's poetry is reflection upon the total charm of the world of childhood. This is a time willingly referred to by adults, for they perceive in it values essential for further development: love, a sense of safety, attempts to become acquainted with the world and its accompanying nature as well as the unhampered childish imagination.

Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī in his work does not concentrate on a concrete subject. He has numerous interests. In the volume *Julūs aṣ-ṣabāḥ 'alā al-baḥr* (*The Morning's Rest by the Sea*) he writes about anxiety, the fatherland and the Palestinian question.

The cycle of poems *Taḥawwulāt Imrī an-naft* (*Metamorphoses of the Man of Oil*) refers to the changes that occurred in the country following the discovery of oil. In the title there appears the word *Imrī*, which recalls a great poet of the pre-Islamic period, Imrū al-Qays:

*I love you.
I distill your love,
I export it to my heart,
Pump out passion from myself.
The air is gas,
And my heart has become an oil stain.
I love you
Like oil.*¹²⁴

The words uttered by the lyrical I relate to the economic changes, hence even love is treated as the title transaction (*Ṣafqa*) and presented by means of the metaphor of distillation (as is borne out by the verb *karrara – ukarriru*). The poet most clearly wanted to show that the social-economic changes have influenced the emotional sphere of the former desert inhabitants. The author clearly dissociates himself from the contemporary vision of the chaotically created socio-economic changes, ones undertaken without the harmony of a plan. For fundamental values are being blotted out, while chaos encompasses many spheres of life. Even speech stops fulfilling its functions and it becomes increasingly difficult to make oneself understood:

*Every time when I smash a shell,
I see myself.
Every time when I smash a shell,
I see myself.
Every time when I smash a shell,
I see myself.
Do you see me as I emerge like a pearl,
Have I already become a seal?*¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī, *Ṣafqa*, in: *Julūs aṣ-ṣabāḥ 'alā al-baḥr*, ash-Shāriqa 2003, pp. 35–36.

¹²⁵ Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī, *Insān*, in: *Julūs aṣ-ṣabāḥ...*, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

The lyrical I desires to create a new order from the foundations. He has to regulate reality, return meaning to concepts and words. Poetry – as one may conclude – should be linked with life, should be closer every day, colloquial and with it closer to precise language than to the rhetoric of former creativity.

There are many references in Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī's texts to the fatherland, which has become for the poet the highest of values.

*I prayed to you.
You are the comrade of my sorrow,
You are the comrade of my pain,
You are the comrade of my regret
And this journey.
I have made from you my mother;
I have made from you my fatherland
And I have made from you holy illumination.*¹²⁶

The fatherland becomes in the poem the spiritual bulwark. The lyrical I distinguishes himself with immense patriotism, attachment to his country and willingness to sacrifice himself in the name of the greater good. He complains of loneliness, pain and regret. He dream of feeling safe.

The two-line piece referring to the Palestinian question is worthy of attention. The title *Ṣabrā wa Shātīlā* (*Sabra and Shatila*) – are the names of Palestinian refugee camps on the periphery of Beirut. The poet describes the massacre of September 1982 in which thousands of innocent people died:

*Believe me, I did not see that slaughter;
But I heard the photographs.*¹²⁷

The extermination of innocent people defines the entire landscape of this extremely short poem. Death happens to everyone and removes the right to a normal life. It always turns out to be the strongest. The lyrical I has been marked with the branding of death. He will always remember images and hear sounds knowing that at a given moment the inflicted harm will be cleared.

Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī concentrates his gaze on a depiction of suffering not only in relation to the individual but also with regard to nations. He is a man gifted in reflection, reaching out to the deepest recesses of the soul.

The poetry of **Khulūd al-Mu‘allā** is a record of feelings, thoughts and associations. She talks to us through pictures. The poetess draws her knowledge of the world from her own experiences and the events from her life. In the volume *Hā' al-ghā'ib* (*Unpresent*) she

¹²⁶ Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī, *Nashīd Sulaymān*, in: *Julūs aṣ-ṣabāḥ...*, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

¹²⁷ Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī, *Ṣabrā wa Shātīlā*, in: *Julūs aṣ-ṣabāḥ...*, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

touches on the question of loneliness and love. She writes about a journey, of tiredness with life and sorrow:

*The ports are too confined for me,
One exhausted by journeys
Who have their stories,
And I have mine.
They tow my baggage,
And when winter comes,
I will announce a journey.
[...]
My heavens are overfilled with an alienness
Which overcomes me.
My ships become lost,
Always when I am returning home.*¹²⁸

The poetess treats her poems as a calling from the depths of her soul. They inspire reflection and one may gain the impression that Khulūd al-Mu'allā is seeking through her work a route to an understanding of herself. In subsequent poems further veils are uncovered, behind which hide the truth about her:

*I think that I am a woman tired by travel,
But this is a passion,
And I am a woman,
Who knows who has incarcerated her.*¹²⁹

*Each of us both is a witness of separation.
Each of us both yearn embrace.
Each of us both burns with love,
While the yearning resides in luxury.*¹³⁰

The next poems in the collection combine the motif of love, which is the aim of the poetess's life wanderings as well as her creative searches. The author attempts to grasp the unrepeatable beauty of this feeling. Love appears equally in the context of the suffering connected with separation from one's beloved:

*How am I to live now he is so far from me?
[...]
His absence is my death
My beloved is the lord of absence
And of love*¹³¹

¹²⁸ Khulūd al-Mu'allā, *Li-annanī*, in: *Hā' al-ghā'ib*, Bayrūt 2003, pp. 11–16.

¹²⁹ Khulūd al-Mu'allā, *Bihī akhtimu al-lughā*, in: *Hā' al-ghā'ib*, op.cit., p. 51.

¹³⁰ Khulūd al-Mu'allā, *Marhūna bi-dhākiratī*, in: *Hā' al-ghā'ib*, op.cit., p. 63.

¹³¹ Khulūd al-Mu'allā, *Mass*, in: *Hā' al-ghā'ib*, op.cit., pp. 69–72.

*I have been born from his love,
He alone can destroy me
And bestow life.*¹³²

The last sentences of the volume express the hope for happiness at the side of the beloved:

*A half of my soul is in separation,
but the whole is love.
And when
He returns to my country,
Will he remain forever?*¹³³

Khulūd al-Mu‘allā’s poetry is extremely personal in character. We sense in her lyrics a huge diversity of mood. Love is something over which one needs to constantly fight. Despite the fact that at times it lasts only fleetingly, it nevertheless completely changes us and the world around us. It therefore appears as if the aim of Khulūd’s poetry is reflection upon universal values, ones that are always current and actual, such as love and the sense and purpose of life.

Diversity in subject matter as well as the immensity of questions raised characterise the poetry of **Nāṣir Jubrān**. His poetry teaches a view of the world and an understanding of one’s fellow man. Each time the poet touches on those matters fundamental for man: his nature, existence, a sense of safety. The lyrical I speaks out on essential matters, as if in the name of each and every one of us.

We can observe in Nāṣir’s work an involvement in the problems of Arab unity and the Palestinian question:

*We talked...
About wounded Palestine
And the nation’s duration
About Palestine as a POW.*¹³⁴

The poet demands justice and an end to the tragedy for the Palestinian people. He is conscious of the chasm that exists between the lofty slogans of Arab unity and reality itself:

*Groups of Arabs clothed in the attire of discord
Promises like water...
And the green river laments
The handcuffs that can never be cast aside.*¹³⁵

¹³² Khulūd al-Mu‘allā, *Waḥdahu yutlifunī*, in: *Hā’ al-ghā’ib*, *op.cit.*, p. 101.

¹³³ Khulūd al-Mu‘allā, *Madfū’a bi-maḥabbatī*, in: *Hā’ al-ghā’ib*, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

¹³⁴ Nāṣir Jubrān, *Laytanī mā zurtu Rāshid*, in: *Istihālāt as-sukūn*, Sūriya 1993, p. 11.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*.

Nāṣir Jubrān returns to the subject of Palestine in the final poem entitled *Istihālāt as-sukūn* (*The Impossibility of Silence*):

*I apologise oh Palestine, what can we say?
How can we justify the silence of the eye?
All the capitals share your pain,
And we know not what we are to do.
[...]
Take me to yourselves
And give me your stones,
So I could see Jerusalem...
And construct from my bones
A thousand stones.*

16.02.1988¹³⁶

The date beneath the poem suggests that the inspiration for its creation was drawn from the first Palestinian Uprising (*intifāḍa*). He demands a solution to the Palestinian question, considering it to be of the utmost importance for all Arabs. He is saddened however by the lack of Arab unity. The experience of occupation constitutes a source of deep inner conflict. History leads to killing, destruction, hatred. Already the very awareness of participation in the historical process forces the hero to come to terms with reality. The poet cannot do anything besides a poetic expression of bitterness and pain. Resultingly he accentuates his disagreement with the reality he has been condemned to. The poet symbolically presents their heroism and the tragedy of the heroes of the uprising. The poems cited above aim not only to emphasise the frailty of the world of dreams, but become the poetic equivalent of the lyrical I.

Nāṣir Jubrān exhorts in the poem *Hadhihi al-ḥamāma* (*That Dove*) peace, concord and brotherhood amongst peoples:

*The twig in her beak smells
Of love mixed with peace
If this dove dies,
Then speech ceases.*¹³⁷

Death, pain, suffering, hate decide on the shape of the reality surrounding the poet. And after all everyone should have the right to love, dreams and hope. These few lines are saturated with symbols. The author intentionally introduced the exceptionally strong Muslim rooted symbol of the olive branch. *For the olive is, beside the palm the symbol of paradise, as well as of the perfect man.*¹³⁸ The olive branch in the hand of the poet is above all a symbol of peace, in a way similar to *the dove, the symbol of the bringer of good tidings.*¹³⁹ Finally *speech* has a multiple meaning in the text. It is not exclusively understood as language, but is identified with the Arab homeland. For in speech and

¹³⁶ Nāṣir Jubrān, *Istihālāt as-sukūn*, in: *Istihālāt...*, op.cit., p. 98.

¹³⁷ Nāṣir Jubrān, *Hadhihi al-ḥamāma*, in: *Istihālāt...*, op.cit., pp. 20–21.

¹³⁸ Marek Dziekan, *Symbolika...*, op.cit., p. 79.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

language there is contained the entirety of Arab cultural identity: art, literature, myths, traditions and heritage. These are collective values, the property of all Arabs.

The author returns to the symbol of the olive, the olive tree, and the fatherland in the poem *Ghinā' al-baḥr li-z-zaytūn* (*The Song of the Sea for the Olive Tree*):

*The smell of olive wood
Wedded the aroma of the sea.
The Arab fatherland became
as a river.
Washing me... and I wash with it,
And know not we what will be.
...
Oh you olive branch,
Enduring in me,
Live in her.*¹⁴⁰

The olive tree repeatedly appears in the text, and does so to emphasise the state of the poet's soul and his desire for the peace which should reign over the whole world. The author has waited a long time for change, but no breakthrough has occurred, conclusions have not been drawn from the tragic events and experiences of decades.

In the poem *Musāfir naḥwa aḍ-ḍiyā'* (*Travelling Towards the Light*) the poet's soul seeks its own route. It desires to discover the sense and order of the world and of life. Individual lines juxtapose hope and despair, joy and pain. All these factors make up the whole of human life:

*I travel towards the light,
And on my lips a smile.
On my lips the song of the seas.
My blood is the tears of the palms,
My pain is the gust of the sail.*¹⁴¹

Further on in the text the poet describes the new concrete town as a place to live, a place of struggle with evil, a place where man is lost and alienated. The demonic side of urban life is depicted in the poem:

*The shadow leave me,
And the cities of cement
Persecute me... they haunt.*¹⁴²

The city clearly oppresses, even terrorises, while the hope for a better life within its walls is but an illusion.

Nāṣir Jubrān fears the future. He expertly formulates this in the poem *Khawfī min al-ātī* (*Fear of What Will Be*):

¹⁴⁰ Nāṣir Jubrān, *Ghinā' al-baḥr li-z-zaytūn*, w: *Istiḥālāt...*, op.cit., p. 31.

¹⁴¹ Nāṣir Jubrān, *Musāfir naḥwa aḍ-ḍiyā'*, in: *Istiḥālāt...*, op.cit., p. 38.

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 39.

*Fear accompanies me unceasingly,
Sorrow links me and the palm,
The street crawls... crawls.
No room for a trunk has been left.
The palm cries...*¹⁴³

The lyrical I identifies itself with the past which is represented by the palm of the poem. To this day the palm plays a significant role in the culture of the Arabs of the Gulf for it symbolises riches, prosperity and generosity. In Arabia it is considered as a result of its economic significance as its own form of 'the tree of life'. Consequently it was taken to be a holy tree in the pre-Islamic day. In Islam the palm is considered as one of God's gifts for man.¹⁴⁴

The poet feels alone. He considers the future should be built on the strong foundations of the past. He rejects the ruining of what once had been good and the source of pride. The poem calls for the building of understanding between the generations and a search for what unites not divides.

Nāṣir Jubrān believes in a great Arab homeland and sees himself as an heir to its history, tradition and culture, which he gives expression to in the poem *Mādhā aqūl?* (*What Am I to Say?*):

*Tomorrow we shall see
The return of glory,
The horses will free themselves
And will serve the cries of the rider.*¹⁴⁵

This poem expresses hope for the future. Optimism grows with the conviction in limitless human possibilities, freedom and the free choice of the future. The lyrical I enjoys the moment which will come and awaken the Arabs from their lethargy.

The value of Nāṣir Jubrān's verse is in the attention it draws to concepts such as freedom, truth, love and justice. There is no absence of references to social matters such as abject poverty, injustice and humiliation. Nāṣir Jubrān's work analyses the place of man in the world, his relations with others, his relationship to himself, his nation and homeland.

The work of 'Alī al-Sha'ālī is the combination of tradition and modernity, this being equally the case for content as well as form. In the poems from the newest volume, *Wu-jūh wa ukhrā mut'aba* (*Faces and Others Exhausted*), man is witness to what occurs around him and is always able to uncover new things. In discovering them he discovers himself simultaneously.

¹⁴³ Nāṣir Jubrān, *Khawfī min al-āṭī*, in: *Istihālāt...*, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁴ Marek Dziekan, *Symbolika...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 80–81.

¹⁴⁵ Nāṣir Jubrān, *Mādhā aqūl?*, in: *Istihālāt...*, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

In the poem *Ibqa 'andī (Remain with Me)* the poet expels from himself pain and the suffering that is loneliness. He speaks in an extremely personal way:

*When I sit alone,
I chew loneliness like a thorn and death.
I observe the room day and night
And all the things that surround me.*¹⁴⁶

‘Alī al-Sha‘ālī constructs his own world, which does not differ from those affairs and matters that are close to all people. For subsequent works concern the family and nation. Extremely personal digressions accompany current political events, based on moral, philosophical-religious and pan-Arabic subjects.

‘Alī al-Sha‘ālī’s poetry works on the reader through association. In the poem *Ummati al-khayl (The Race of Horse)* the horses symbolise freedom and dignity, loyalty and bravery – features that are valued in the Arab identity. The horse is also the literary attribute of poetic inspiration, while in the Koran it is one of the animals given by God to man to help him. Hence the strong link the Arab peoples have for horses.¹⁴⁷ The poem also talks of the strong link of the poet with the people, expressing the hope that this will continue in the contemporary world together with all its traditions and customs:

*First the people, then the mother...
The nation is eternal...
While the mother only in the seconds of meetings.
So she taught me
She who breastfed me.
We are dying and will return
For you
Oh you nation filled with love for poetry and horses,
You bathe in your illumination,
You drink bitter coffee.
May you endure,
Live!*¹⁴⁸

The greatest value for ‘Alī al-Sha‘ālī is the fatherland. He trusts it and feels safe within its loving motherlike embrace, something reflected in the poem *Lā tughādir (Don’t Let Go)*:

*Between your hands my life seems a light,
I draw roads like vertebra.
Oh, my mother [motherland – author’s note]
I pray to your countenance,
Bow my brow before you
Filled with love.*¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ ‘Alī al-Sha‘ālī, *Ibqa 'andī*, in: *Wujūh wa ukhrā mut‘aba*, Abū Zabi 2010, p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ Por. Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik symboli*, *op.cit.*, pp. 157–161.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Alī al-Sha‘ālī, *Ummati al-khayl*, in: *Wujūh...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 40–41.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Alī al-Sha‘ālī, *Lā tughādir*, in: *Wujūh...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 110–111.

In the volume *Naḥla wa rabāba* (*The Bee and the Rababa*¹⁵⁰), published in 2004, ʿAlī al-Shaʿālī directs a poetic prayer to God in the poem *ad-Dīwān* (*Volume of Poetry*):

*Oh God..., we have found shelter in you.
There is no one besides you, who makes the morning from darkness.*

*When we have committed sins,
we have returned to you,
Because only in you can we cleanse ourselves of them.
Oh God, expel evil and unhappiness,
The plotting of people and the evil eye.*¹⁵¹

The poet is proud of his being an Arab and Muslim, something emphasised in the poem *Iyāka an talmas al-qumbula...* (*Careful, Don't Touch the Bomb...*):

*We are lords of worlds,
Our deeds are lavish,
Our faith the most glorious,
Our sword the sharpest,
Our shot is well taken,
Our language is beautiful,
Our blood is noble,
Hard hands and dusky foreheads.
Yes, we are Muslims.
For our glory and pride!*¹⁵²

ʿAlī al-Shaʿālī's poetry is based on the metric foot *taf'īla*. There are no visionist effects or complicated metaphors. However, peace and calm result as a consequence. Yet the poet also searches for a knowledge of the world, one that will motivate its future undertakings. He attempts to find help and support in various stances, within love and religion.

¹⁵⁰ Rababa – a Bedouin instrument.

¹⁵¹ ʿAlī al-Shaʿālī, *ad-Dīwān*, in: *Naḥla wa rabāba* [n.p.] 2004, p. 8.

¹⁵² ʿAlī al-Shaʿālī, *Iyāka an talmas al-qumbula...*, in: *Naḥla...*, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

Chapter III

New Times – New Poetry (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*)

Unquestionably the most numerous representative within contemporary Emirate poetry is that of poetry written in prose (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*). This is characterised by an absence of foot and rhythm.

The following Emirate poets belong to this particular current: Ṣabiyya Khamīs, Thānī as-Suwaydī, Khālīd al-Baddūr, Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, Khālīd ar-Rāshīd, Nujūm al-Ghānim, Muḥammad al-Mazrū'ī, al-Hanūf Muḥammad, Ḥārīb az-Zāhirī, Maysūn Ṣaqr, Aḥmad al-'Asam, Wafā' Khāzandār, Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī and 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb.

Ṣabiyya Khamīs is considered to be one of the most gifted of contemporary United Arab Emirate poets, writers and essayists. She has published over thirty volumes of poetry, short stories, critical literary works and those devoted to culture in its broad understanding. Her works have been translated into several languages, including German, Spanish, English and French. As a creator and propagator of a poetical form new to the Emirates – prose poetry (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*) – she is aware of the originality of her verse both with regard to form as content. The author seeks creative inspiration everywhere and in everything.

And thus, *Shaghaf* (*Passion*), a collection of verse published in 2005, is considered to be one of the best of the writer's career. Ṣabiyya Khamīs has fought for women's rights for the whole of her life as from her earliest youth she was forced to demand representation of her rights both as a woman and a member of Arab society.

In the volume *Shaghaf* (*Passion*) the lyrical I falls outside the traditional image of a woman in Arab society. Both in the art of the East as that of the West she is traditionally resented as passive; she is perceived as an object devoid of individual features. The poet rejects this stereotypical image of the mother and wife waiting at home for the return of the man. Ṣabiyya Khamīs returns subjectivity to the woman; allows her to be an active party in feelings, one capable of deeper reflection into her nature. A woman is not defined by absence: she is not condemned to suffering as a result of the absence of her beloved. She displays her feelings: she displays her desire and fear. If she waits as in the work *Laysa li-l-rajul ash-sharqī ḥadīqa asiru fihā* (*There Is No Garden for a Man from the East to Walk In*),¹⁵³ then the sorrow of separation from one's beloved pushes the lyrical I into the direction of positive reflection: real happiness would be impossible without an awareness of suffering. A woman leads an independent, courageous life, she does not fear a change of partner or the search for fortune off her own bat. The liberation of woman is symbolised by flight. Already in the opening poem of the collection *Laḥza ūlā*

¹⁵³ Ṣabiyya Khamīs, *Laysa li-l-rajul ash-sharqī ḥadīqa asiru fihā*, in: *Shaghaf*, ash-Shāriqa 2005, p. 98.

(*The First Moment*) the lyrical I's associations lead from a plane to birds of prey that fly at the peaks of the mountains. The birds represent freedom, an elevation above everyday matters, to loftier aims. The poet identifies herself with the freely flying eagle, for she herself has taken off – elevated on the wings of her creativity.

One may note that the author's poetic transfer is supracultural and timeless in nature. She is conscious of her own creative strength, which is able, if she so desires, to create the world:

*In the imagination water and fire are neighbours,
Both are oneness – at times.*¹⁵⁴

The drawing of attention to the minuteness of cultural differences in relation to the might of love appears also on another textual level: an interesting intervention is the appearance of an inclusion in English. In the work *Irtīmā'āt mufāji'a* (*An Unexpected Decay*) the lyrical I utters:

*Unofficial love
Dangerous love
Sinful and exciting.*¹⁵⁵

It is possible that the use of a foreign language aids the poet in expressing a content forbidden in culture, and therefore also in Arabic. For example in the poem *Al-wuqū' fī al-ḥubb* (*Fall into Love*) the lyrical I asks the way to the centre of the heart, using the English words: the center of the heart.¹⁵⁶ This intervention and method is a conscious choice on the part of the author, who accentuates in this way the most important fragment of the work as well as drawing attention to the force of love, one that is able to obliterate cultural differences. Such poetry could affect every heart:

*I love you
Or do not love,
Between us is an unknown land...*¹⁵⁷

Short, linguistically unadorned verse appears to come out against readers from various circles and in possession of experience manifold in scope. The poet notes in her lyrical introduction that she has consciously chosen such a form. This could be perceived as naive, though she in no way fears such an accusation, which is why she writes about feelings in an emotional way. She does not create with thoughts on critics, she has simply in her sights the wider public: those who have loved, love or desire love.¹⁵⁸

In the poem *Marād al-'ishq* (*The Disease of Love*) we find a description of a difficult feeling which, however, does not lead to ruin. The lyrical I says that within the rush of life everything mixes. The border between life and death is erased, between happiness and unhappiness, between individual existence and the world.

¹⁵⁴ Zabiyya Khamīs, *Laḥza ūlā*, in: *Shaghaf*, op.cit., p. 12.

¹⁵⁵ Zabiyya Khamīs, *Irtīmā'āt mufāji'a*, in: *Shaghaf*, op.cit., p. 28.

¹⁵⁶ Zabiyya Khamīs, *Al-wuqū' fī al-ḥubb*, in: *Shaghaf*, op.cit., p. 14.

¹⁵⁷ Zabiyya Khamīs, *Tāghīyya*, in: *Shaghaf*, op.cit., p. 141.

¹⁵⁸ Zabiyya Khamīs, *Tamhīd*, in: *Shaghaf*, op.cit., p. 6.

Don't crush me the passing dressed up as existence
Life... yes, I live...
And die constantly anew,
Later I remain, exclusively living anew;
On the curb of the source I drink the water that springs forth
And call it love, surprised and shocked
And it seems to me that I see the expression of my soul
And the souls of others
Moving, with letters, body and blood –
*I am happy and proud of their existence ... right until death.*¹⁵⁹

The poet gives her full acceptance of life, its bright and dark sides:

Always I repeated:
I am a woman, the Earth, all the ribs
Today
If this rib is your rib,
*It is me.*¹⁶⁰

Zābiyya Khamīs does not trivialise feelings, she does not ask about lovers, but she shows love in a metaphysical way. For the poet love is the manifestation of humanity. It unites man internally – his corporal and spiritual aspirations – and externally, connecting him with nature, with *sacrum*.

Love is not presented in a one-sided way. Each image of happiness is accompanied by a vision of disillusionment and suffering. In the poet's mature world outlook antitheses complement each other: nothing is exclusively black and white. In moments of the greatest happiness there comes separation. Love is a feeling that encompasses all, therefore the poetic stanzas convey full expression. Love is life, together with its heights and troughs, with its beautiful and difficult moments. A person in love needs a beloved, love cannot exist without suffering and death.

Poems written by Zābiyya Khamīs for the period 2005–2006 in Cairo and New Delhi, and published in 2008 in the United Arab Emirates, comprise the volume *Naḥwa al-abad* (*Towards Eternity*). The poet desires to broaden her horizons and awareness of man, who – in order to understand what is happening in the world – must leave his own backyard. One cannot write the truth about another person without first knowing the whole truth about oneself. Therefore the poet in her texts fulfils a mission, she has much to convey. We are led by a superb guide, thanks to which the recipient is under the impression that he has become a firsthand observer, a participant in the events themselves.

In the poem *Tārīkh tilka ash-shajara* (*The Story of That Tree*) Zābiyya Khamīs describes the phenomenon of war taking on immense dimensions. She conveys a gloomy and grave character onto her artistic vision. An analysis of the history of man and the role of the individual in the world leads the author to the conclusion that the laws of his-

¹⁵⁹ Zābiyya Khamīs, *Maraḍ al-‘ishq*, in: *Shaghaf*, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

¹⁶⁰ Zābiyya Khamīs, *‘An qurb*, in: *Shaghaf*, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

tory and man's existence remain unchanged – they are comprised of blood, violence and suffering:

*Violence on the guillotine of history,
Blood is the fodder of the ruling,
Skulls are the throne of time.*¹⁶¹

Rescue from the situation of violence and war observed daily is an attempt at saving one's own identity from the conflagration of history:

*With difficulty I grab a breath
I have broken wings,
Just like every Arab.*¹⁶²

This thought is continued by the author in the poem *Fī rā'ihāt al-judrān* (*In the Smell of the Walls*):

*You can light the candle
And call for peace to follow
For you and the entire world.*¹⁶³

The poet expresses yearning for a new order and peace. She desires that people in an ordered world have a sense of safety and security. Yet at the same time she emphasises the responsibilities of the individual for the reality that exists around. In the poem *Lā ḥudūd* ('No' to Borders) she condemns all those who reject another, simply because of differences in religion and race:

*I have nothing in common with borders,
My world is not limited by colour
Race and holy books.*¹⁶⁴

All people should be brothers:

*All are my brothers like the water, the air, like the sky.*¹⁶⁵

The author notes the evil, pain, suffering and cruelty in the world which results in man being alienated, distrustful, and unhappy. This is given expression by her in the poem *Dār Ghurba* (*The House of Alienation*):

The world is the home of strangeness...
[...]
*In it pain grows,
In it there is no room for happiness,*

¹⁶¹ Ṣabiyya Khamīs, *Tārīkh tilka ash-shajara*, in: *Naḥwa al-abad*, ash-Shāriqa – Abū Ṣabī 2008, p. 13.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 14.

¹⁶³ Ṣabiyya Khamīs, *Fī rā'ihāt al-judrān*, in: *Naḥwa...*, *op.cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁶⁴ Ṣabiyya Khamīs, *Lā ḥudūd*, in: *Naḥwa...*, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

*In it pain is painted on the face of the newborn
And in his cry*

[...]

*Nothing is how it should be,
Wars from the jungles to the skyscrapers,
And the corpses... are everywhere
Under the earth, above the earth,
In the souls, in the dreams
And in the bank accounts.*¹⁶⁶

War brings annihilation, devoids man of happiness. It permanently cripples the psyche and divests man of belief in the world and people. The new world is ruled by greed and avarice. All undergoes destruction, for people have changed, they have had to change in order to keep apace of civilizational development.

A subsequent verse is a reflection upon the essence of humanity and a yearning for moral order in the world. Man should live in accordance with others and with nature, to open his heart to the light and love:

*Oh faces, which you have healthy souls
Bestow us with light.*¹⁶⁷

The poet does not lose hope, something that is visible in the poems recalling spring. The world appears more beautiful in spring, everything comes to life, while the cycle of yearly changes and seasons will always repeat itself:

*Possibly spring came earlier
And searched for me, although I saw it not.
Again it will come after winter,
Waiting for what passes
Between the fingers.*¹⁶⁸

For spring is the restoration of life after all. It is the period when people and nature are dominated by biological instincts. The poet is clearly fascinated by the biological side of nature. The whole poem *Hadiyat as-samā'* (*The Gift of the Heavens*) is praise to spring and its vitality:

*Beauty with its gates pushes to the fore
Spring with no effort at all
The sun absolves the clouds,
And the trees don spring attire
[...]*

¹⁶⁶ Ṣabiyya Khamīs, *Dār Ghurba*, in: *Naḥwa...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 83–84.

¹⁶⁷ Ṣabiyya Khamīs, *Tubāghitunā ḥaṣīhi al-wujūh*, in: *Naḥwa...*, *op.cit.*, p. 141.

¹⁶⁸ Ṣabiyya Khamīs, *Umniyya*, in: *Naḥwa...*, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

*Spring is the short gift of the sky
For those who ascend to its heights.*¹⁶⁹

Her view of poetic art is revealed in the poem *al-Kitāba (Writing)*. Poetry flows from the depth of the soul, and the poet must choose an appropriate form in order to express thoughts in an understandable and accessible way. There is no readymade recipe for a perfect work. Eminent figures from literature are recalled by Khamīs in the poem, for example Hemingway and Maḥfūz:

*Writing has its windows and souls
[...]
Hemingway discovered masculinity in writing
[...]
While Maḥfuz the Wise spends a whole age,
Worshiping writing.
Daily approaching Its altar;
Not asking when it would come to him.*¹⁷⁰

Poetry is to serve the preservation of the moment, experiences, therefore the poet has an obligation to defend the weak and wronged. Poems are to be guardians of truth, regardless of the circumstances and consequences. The poet cannot be frightened; the poet is to remain a witness to history.

Khamīs's poetic output is rich and varied, it is important to remember however that this is merely a section of her versatile activities. For she is not only a poet but a literature expert and a superb publicist. She writes prose poetry (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*). These are short utterances constructed on the basis of various stylistic means i.e. metaphors, symbols etc. Ḍabiyya Khamīs's poetry is exceptional for many reasons but in particular its traits are authenticity, originality and the author's individualism. In reading her poetry one has the impression that the poems constitute a register of feelings, thoughts and associations. It is difficult to understand contemporary Emirate poetry without a knowledge of her texts.

The poems within the volume *Li-yajiffa rīqu al-baḥr (Let the Spittle of the Sea Dry)* by **Thānī as-Suwaydī** are a reflection of his views on life and man's place in the contemporary world. His poetry is to be a noting down of the signs of the times in which he created it. The words express reality, paint it in a clear way in front of the eyes of the reader's imagination.

Thānī as-Suwaydī depicts an image of suffering, life, joy, the world and the universe. The poet bears the burden of responsibility for the fate of the world. This burden most evidently crushes him:

¹⁶⁹ Ḍabiyya Khamīs, *Hadiyat as-samā'*, in: *Naḥwa...*, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁰ Ḍabiyya Khamīs, *al-Kitāba*, in: *Naḥwa...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 109–110.

*Generosity of the heavens
Burdened
The cares of the earth.
Yesterday
Your face distressed you.*¹⁷¹

As one may suppose, the poet's message expresses the thought that given we have appeared in the world then we must survive in it with all the richness of our experiences. Human feelings are directed by their own laws, which often are independent of the world order surrounding us. The past and the present mutually permeate and there is no clear border between them. We live somewhere at the meeting point of two realities: that which surrounds us and that which resides deep inside of us. Thānī as-Suwaydī attempts to join these expanses and to show how to harmoniously live in them. He understands that everyone is accompanied by fear, suffering and death, yet considers that they may become an asylum in their own way.

The poet examines also the subject of the city as a symbol of evil, sin, and death. His voice is full of pain and despair:

*The face of the universe was
Like a great city
Dressed in death.*¹⁷²

The fragment of the poem *Li-yajiffa rīqu al-baḥr fī famika al-akhḍar* (*Let the Spittle of the Sea Dry on Your Green Lips*) is a reflection upon the evil lying everywhere: both in the city and in the universe. The oppressive atmosphere may exert a destructive influence:

*To when
Your dreams lie on your knees,
They strive to the bed,
And take away your dreams.*¹⁷³

Thānī as-Suwaydī's poetry falls outside any concrete concepts, it cannot be enclosed within the watertight frameworks of definitions. It covers in its own way a series of subjects and does not impose on the reader interpretations. It stimulates associations, encouraging the reader to cooperate.

The poetic talent of **Khālīd al-Baddūr** manifests itself in the ability to analyse the contemporary world and its creation of moods, which place the reader before beautiful poetic images: the image of a woman in love, rain, the sea. In the volume **Shitā'** (*Winter*)

¹⁷¹ Thānī as-Suwaydī, *Li-yajiffa rīqu al-baḥr fī famika al-akhḍar*, in: *Li-yajiffa rīqu al-baḥr*, ash-Shāriqa 1991, p. 56.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 58.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

the author depicts man as an element of nature by utilising concise well-aimed formulations. Time in al-Baddūr plays a noteworthy role. The poet relates himself to it in various ways. He writes of its inescapable passing both from the perspective of hours, days as well as life as a whole and the death that ends it. We see images of fog enveloping trees, of recollections of simple things like the pebbles once collected on the beach, nights – for some turning into day, while simultaneously the end of life for others. Here we stand in the face of death compared by Khālīd al-Baddūr to the waves on the sea, which in a single moment are able to engulf a man.

Dr Ramaḍān Buṣṭāwaysī in his short commentary to the volume writes that Khālīd al-Baddūr's poetry raises questions of one's search for oneself, the essence of which is who we are. He draws attention to the fact that al-Baddūr makes his literary testimonies our own. The observation as to what is al-Baddūr's poetry is an apt one – *a dialogue of one's own I, of the internal essence, with that which surrounds it, with nature and the visible world*.¹⁷⁴

In reading Khālīd al-Baddūr's poems we observe a play of light and shade, which may be read as a metaphor for life, death and the passing of time. The poet moves simply to universal truths and the reality that is a part of each and every one of us, as is shown in the poem *Qaṭratān* (*Two drops*):

*A drop of rain
Runs down
Onto the window...
A tear runs down
onto
the soul.*¹⁷⁵

The image of falling rain creates an atmosphere of sorrow, pity, emptiness, desertion and loneliness. In the drops of rain one can perceive the symbol of passing. Everyone must be aware that even the happiest of moments have their end. The subsequent stanzas lead one to the conclusion that tears act as a cleansing, the cry that brings with it catharsis washing the world clean of evil, violence, suffering, bringing with it relief and solace. The poet clearly lacks belief in the meaning of his very own existence, something that makes this extremely short poem a moving poetic confession.

In another poem, *Qurb al-baḥr* (*Close to the Sea*), Khālīd al-Baddūr describes an image known to him from childhood:

*Close to the sea
The creature finds its place
Under the sand
The shell turns into luxuries,
While the snail carrying its home on its back
Fights in order to reach
The sea.*¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Ramaḍān Buṣṭāwaysī, in: *Shitā'*, *ash-Shāriqa* 2002 (the cover of the book).

¹⁷⁵ Khālīd al-Baddūr, *Qaṭratān*, in: *Shitā'*, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

¹⁷⁶ Khālīd al-Baddūr, *Qurb al-baḥr*, in: *Shitā'*, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

Once again the poet relates with immense simplicity to the dimension of the social existence of every creation which has to find its place here on earth. The poem is a manifestation of dreams of a splendid future, one towards which everyone aspires. It is an optimistic vision, one full of hope for the obtainment of the goal set, yet also on the truth of forging out one's own fate. The aim is, however, so important that one cannot cease in the quest for its fulfilment.

Amongst the many motifs and themes the poet's attention is riveted to man in his uniqueness, individuality and solitude, something we are able to observe in the poem *Lā antaḏīru aḥadan* (*I'm Not Waiting for Anyone*):

*Summer still lies in the corridors,
Yellowed papers gather in the corners,
And I
Wait for no one.*¹⁷⁷

A similar mood of pain and emptiness is painted by the poem *Ba'da an yanam al-kalām* (*After the Words Have Fallen Asleep*):

*At night,
When the world fell quiet,
There remained nothing except for the voice of the wind
[...]
A tear extinguishes a candle,
Night becomes heavy,
And the house
Cries.*¹⁷⁸

The work is poetic reflection on sorrow, the sense of emptiness after the loss of someone close, without whom one is unable to conceive of life after. The huge sense of despair not only envelops the lyrical I but also the house, the places in which recollections of the beloved one are recalled. After the departure of one beloved we are not the same, and our thoughts about the world equally undergo a diametrical change.

In the volume under discussion the poet reaches an evaluation of contemporariness, making reference to fundamental moral norms. Khālīd al-Baddūr should be considered an independent poet, one not subject to influences and norms.

His latest volume of poetry is entitled *Maṭar 'alā al-baḥr* (*Rain Above the Sea*). In the poem *Sata'ūd* (*It Will Return*), which begins the entire volume, the sun functions as a symbol of life and existence:

*Above the horizon of the sea
Is the sun which in a moment will go.
Above the clouds
Is the moon,
Which will look down on the earth,*

¹⁷⁷ Khālīd al-Baddūr, *Lā antaḏīru aḥadan*, in: *Shitā'*, op.cit., p. 125.

¹⁷⁸ Khālīd al-Baddūr, *Ba'da an yanam al-kalām*, in: *Shitā'*, op.cit., p. 165.

*And after the nocturnal journey
Full of mysteries and love
The sun will return to us
Will return,
Because
It has never left us yet.*¹⁷⁹

The sun in the Koran is one of God's miracles. It passes for the all-seeing eye of God, the heart of the whole of existence.¹⁸⁰ The moon is the measure of human time and temporal time.¹⁸¹ The poet wanders in the regions of the day and night, carrying a message of love and hope.

The poet returns to childhood and school days in the poem *ad-Dars al-awwal* (*The First Lesson*). Most people associate this period with being carefree and joyful. Khalid's recollections are cruel. The author most clearly experiences relief that this stage in his life has at last come to an end:

*Our school was situated on the shoulders of the sea.
Those winter mornings were cruel,
When I arose frightened,
Awaiting the portion of beatings
And the group punishments.
Then I could not swallow the spittle
Out of fear.*¹⁸²

In reading this poem it is difficult not to have the impression that the life of man in the contemporary world is marked by sadness and loneliness from the very earliest years. A child must carry the burden of responsibility, which is far too great for him to bear. The poem stands out for its brevity in artistic means, its simplicity of expression, thanks to which it is highly suggestive.

Literature once again is a faithful accompaniment of social and economic changes. The sea, which appears in the majority of the poems, is of huge importance and significance for the inhabitants of the Gulf. It playing the role of a source of work and pleasure. In the poem *Ṣayf hadhā al-ʿām* (*The Summer of that Year*) the poet refers to the former professions of pearl divers and fishermen:

*My father did not take me aboard with him,
On the ship sailing toward India
[...]
There are no boats there,
Or sailors or birds.*¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Khālīd al-Baddūr, *Sata'ūd*, in: *Maṭar 'alā al-baḥr*, Bayrūt 2009, p. 9.

¹⁸⁰ Marek Dziekan, *Symbolika arabsko-muzułmańska: mały słownik*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 95–96.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

¹⁸² Khālīd al-Baddūr, *ad-Dars al-awwal*, in: *Maṭar...*, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁸³ Khālīd al-Baddūr, *Ṣayf hadhā al-ʿām*, in: *Maṭar...*, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

The poet does not want to come to terms with the fast rate of civilisational change, the devastation of nature, the displacement of respected professions, the disappearance of the bazaars and intimate contacts between people. This is depicted by the poem *Li-ajl binā' shāhiq* (*As a Result of the Skyscrapers*):

*I looked from my window
I remember that there once was a sea.
I looked long and hard,
Searching for the morning bird.
The trees had already been cleared,
And the massive machines
Had dug up the earth.
All this to build a skyscraper.
[...]
One day
I will leave the city –
So I told myself,
When in front of me the cloud flowed past
Smoking.¹⁸⁴*

The poet makes it clear that a part of his compatriots attempt to free themselves of the sea, of traditions, of family and moral values. For them the most important is becoming rich quickly and attempts to impress others with the latest obtainments of civilization. He does not cease, however, in his recollection of the past. In the poem *Dhahabū* (*They Are No More*) he recalls the sailors, the fishermen and their difficult work:

*Hills of clouds –
A storm
Will hit not earlier than
In a few hours.
The sea is expansive,
Their boat slowly beats the waves
With oars.
Melody and song.
Wet trees, radiation flashes above their bodies,
And the men depart.¹⁸⁵*

The future – as results from Khālīd al-Baddūr's poem – should be constructed on the solid foundations of the past. Though this does not mean the uncritical praising of everything that has passed. Respect should be shown to the areas of tradition which constituted a source of fundamental values. Poems are a form of summons to understanding between generations and a search for what links them.

¹⁸⁴ Khālīd al-Baddūr, *Li-ajl binā' shāhiq*, in: *Maṭar...*, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁸⁵ Khālīd al-Baddūr, *Dhahabū*, in: *Maṭar...*, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

Affirmation of life, acceptance of pain and worry, acceptance of one's fate are the most characteristic determinants of the poetry of **Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī**, in the volume of poems entitled *Hadhā al-masā' lanā* (*This Evening Is Ours*). The poet is not embarrassed to show her feelings, sufferings and love.

The poet speaks in her verses of feelings and recollections, of their passing and subtleness. In the poem *Qahr al-khawf* (*The Stopping of Fear*) she expresses the conviction that she will overcome fear:

*I plucked out the fear from my heart,
For the winds to carry it far.
I sit on my steed,
For the stars to light my way,
And I overcome fear and will go further.*¹⁸⁶

The attitude presented is a source of hope, happiness, it frees one from all the chains hampering freedom. Freedom of choice as to the route to be taken is the symbolic sign of submission to one's lot, to the mood of the moment, and hence the acceptance of life with an appropriate openness to people who are able to appreciate the little things and from these derive joy and a sense of happiness.

A limiting of one's own needs and requirements in relation to the world and one's self is a source of internal calm, a sense of independence and the possibility to appease expectations:

*Still the taste of sorrow
Embraces me in my recollections,
And I am waiting for the rain,
To wash clean the remains of the wounds
Painted by the passing cloud
In the body of the fatherland.*¹⁸⁷

The work *Ṭarīq az-zuḥām* (*The Crowded Road*) is saturated with sorrow. The lyrical I subjected to the mood of the poem awaits the rain that will bring cleansing. The author appears lost in her own thoughts and recollections. She is plunged into reflection and a sense of unhappiness.

The poet gives no ready answers, she does not impose interpretations, she opens up new horizons, for the depth of reception in her texts depends on the limits of our imagination. She revolts against failures and life's lack of successes. In the poem *'Anāqīd ḥulm* (*A Fistful of Dreams*) we read:

*Strangeness attacks me,
Permeates my veins.
I look for myself*

¹⁸⁶ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Qahr al-khawf*, in: *Hadhā al-masā' lanā*, ash-Shāriqa 1997, p. 21.

¹⁸⁷ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Ṭarīq az-zuḥām*, in: *Hadhā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

*In the madness of the night,
In the leaves of the tree full of drops of dew,
In the verse which is still not ready.*¹⁸⁸

The text expresses the poet's feelings, thoughts and desires. The author feels lonely and alienated. She desires to find herself in life. Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī is far from being ecstatic. The world in which she lives is full of pain and suffering, and the lyricism gives expression to what the author feels and experiences.

In the poems from the volume *Hadhā al-masā' lanā* (*This Evening Is Ours*) there is no lack of reflection upon the contemporary world and the spiritual condition of man. The poet expresses her love for the city and her homeland in the poem *Madīnatī at-tā'iha* (*My Lost City*):

*My fatherland is my love,
The love of a far off journeyer.
That city,
Which sleeps soundly in the distance.*¹⁸⁹

The poetical world of Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī is an escape from everydayness and the pedestrianization of life. It becomes an area for the experiencing of one's own feelings towards family, the city, one's homeland, a means of expression for what is hidden within. The poet does not explain reality she simply describes it as she perceives it:

*In the cafes
Of oblivion
Memory
Holds me
The winds gossip
And bring with themselves
The taste of yearning.*¹⁹⁰

Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī's poems are based on images which enable the poetry to be written in prose (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*), allowing for freedom in creative expression. The poet does not introduce rhyme or rhythm. She is independent and preserves her own literary vision.

The last poetic volume of Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, entitled *Bawḥ al-ḥamām* (*The Honest Talk of the Dove*), deals with themes of love, freedom, reality, dreams, patriotism. Many of the author's texts are devoted to the problems of women, she presents their experiences, feelings and thoughts. In the poem *Imra'at al-kibriyā'* (*Proud Women*) she writes:

*My dream was greater than collecting
The drops of rain
The winds directed me
Towards the thorn*

¹⁸⁸ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, 'Anāqīd ḥulm, in: *Hadhā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁹ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Madīnatī at-tā'iha*, in: *Hadhā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁹⁰ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Tharthara ar-riyāḥ*, in: *Hadhā...*, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

*I experienced the smell of a wound
From a child I was armed in patience.*¹⁹¹

Despite the painful recollections she is relentless and does not give up:

*Long is my spring.
The cluster of my dream
Lives in moments,
It does not find room for the crying of the dove
I am still a woman of pride.*¹⁹²

The poems from this volume are created by a woman who is aware of her worth. She knows that she is exceptional and that poetry is her calling. In the poem '*Afwān ayyuhā al-qalam* (*I Apologise to You, Oh Pen*) she divulges the very innards of her soul and the dormant desire for freedom residing there:

*Freedom has neither taste, or smell.
It is like a cloud, from which the drops of rain
Do not flow down*

[...]

*I have taken the decision to remain imprisoned in my dream,
While my soul is imprisoned in my diaries,
Until I meet with you, oh Sun!*¹⁹³

The title of the poem – '*Afwān ayyuhā al-qalam* (*I Apologise to You, Oh Pen*) – shows that poetry should always be totally uncompromising, although one should not have to speak directly about every matter. Poetry reserves itself the right to ambiguity, the creation of a metamorphosed image of the world. It demands courage from the poet, independence and perseverance.

The poet extols her love for her homeland in the verse *Ṭayf adh-dhikrayāt* (*Apparitions of Reminiscences*):

*The fatherland is yearning.
I walk and talk about the love which has empowered me
Love for the homeland, whose melody I repeat
[...]
I searched for
A desert,
Which could embrace my tent.
Steps voids
And the tear which passed.
....*

¹⁹¹ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Imra'at al-kibriyā'*, in: *Bawḥ al-ḥamām*, ash-Shāriqa 2008, p. 19.

¹⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 20.

¹⁹³ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, '*Afwān ayyuhā al-qalam*', in: *Bawḥ...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 23, 25.

*I still dream
Of green grass
In the sand I carve out
A new alphabet.*¹⁹⁴

The poem is an attempt at defining the concept of fatherland and the indication of its varied senses of meaning. Initially fatherland is first and foremost the place of one's birth, of such importance to everyone. Later, when man grows up, the perspective from which he views his country changes – its natural beauty, history and traditions. The fatherland brings with it not only happiness and joy but also concerns and pain, and also sometimes it demands sacrifices:

*I travel like an eagle
In all the directions of the world and without aim.
I have not found
Anything that could replace the fatherland.
To you, my fatherland,
I gave the patience of my soul.
For you became addicted to expectation.
For you I have no answer;
The words became angry with me.*¹⁹⁵

The poet does not lose hope however, and does not want to return to the past but to live in the future something that is emphasised in the poem *Ḥayy al-muḍāri* ' (*The Estates of Contemporariness*):

*I will on the estate of now,
I will not remain in the past.
In the chapters of my story
Resides the mystery of my happiness.
I yearn for them
Like I do for the homeland.*¹⁹⁶

At times she is hit by creative powerlessness, as is seen in the poem *Inzilāq* (*Delay*):

*Damned letters persecute me,
Sit like an octopus
On my fingers
They search for a corridor,
Which permeates through
Paper, looking for the madness of love.*¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Ṭayf adh-dhikrayāt*, in: Bawḥ..., *op.cit.*, pp. 29–30.

¹⁹⁵ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Usāfir ka-n-nasr*, in: Bawḥ..., *op.cit.*, pp. 32, 34.

¹⁹⁶ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Ḥayy al-muḍāri* ', in: Bawḥ..., *op.cit.*, p. 79.

¹⁹⁷ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Inzilāq*, in: Bawḥ..., *op.cit.*, p. 43.

All the verses contained in the volume *Bawḥ al-ḥamām* (*The Honest Talk of the Dove*) are also in form prose poetry (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*). Their message is equally understandable for recipients from the East as from the West. Described in them is a love that relates to universal values.

Khālīd ar-Rāshīd discovered emotional balance while writing about nature far from his native country at his home in the Himalayas. The volume of verse *Kulluhu azraq* (*Everything is Heavenly*) that took twenty five years in the creation emanates humility, an affirmation of life, consent for one's destiny, suffering as well as rapture for the beauty of nature. These are lyrics simple in construction and written in prose poetry (*qaṣīdat an-nathr*).

In the poem that opens the collection, *al-Hawā'*, *al-bayt* (*Air, Home*), the lyrical I accentuates its loneliness:

*The soul has other places
There beyond the mountain peaks,
On which snow falls.
Life bestows the peaks with longing.
That which I have experienced in life
From A to Z.*¹⁹⁸

The poem not only depicts an image of nature, but also the landscape of a soul tormented by sorrow:

*I can no longer stand
My life
I cannot stand the noise
In this place which has
No human countenance.*¹⁹⁹

The poet perceives in himself darkness, an inability to experience feelings, the affliction of deep-rooted sorrow. He does not want, however, to struggle alone with his internal state. On his fiftieth birthday the poet returns in his recollections to the past, to his family home, to a beloved woman:

*I was lonely
And the world was lonely.
Together we walk
In the gloom.
The beginning of youth before fifty.*

[...]

¹⁹⁸ Khālīd ar-Rāshīd, *al-Hawā'*, *al-bayt*, in: *Kulluhu azraq*, ash-Shāriqa 2007, p. 13.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

*I return home.
In my life is
The woman of my soul.*²⁰⁰

The poet clearly sees his fiftieth birthday as a turning point given the number of times he returns to it in his poems. The anniversary forces Khālīd ar-Rāshīd to reflect on his passing life and the future:

*My route is full of sun –
To home,
Before the beginning of the year;
Before the end of the year;
Before the fiftieth birthday.*²⁰¹

Man's fate intertwines everyday matters and responsibilities. There should also be no absence of time to contemplate nature and to search for solace in art. Births demarcate life and the flow of time leading to death. Such is the truth of the human lot, which needs to be accepted fully.

*I return to my sorrow...
I see him,
I sit next to him.
We look at each other
And we look as if we were full of longing.*²⁰²

Each and every man is able to fulfill only the route assigned to him, in his own way to take in that which envelops and surrounds him, to forge relations with other people and only when experienced after the flow of many years is able to fully understand the meaning of everyday labour and the adversities of the destiny experienced:

*I will return.
Joy will fill me,
My voice deserts me
Like a stone on a stone
On the road*

[...]

*I return home.
On my route is another road.*

[...]

*I return home,
Nobody sees me.*²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Khālīd ar-Rāshīd, *an-Nahr yamur*, in: *Kulluhu azraq, op.cit.*, pp. 36–37.

²⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

²⁰² Khālīd ar-Rāshīd, *Bi-'aynayn maftūḥatayn*, in: *Kulluhu azraq, op.cit.*, p. 224.

²⁰³ Khālīd ar-Rāshīd, *Ḥajar 'alā ḥajar al-bayt*, in: *Kulluhu azraq, op.cit.*, pp. 196–197.

The poem is saturated with sorrow. The lyrical subject yearns for home, for its country. It feels lonely and alienated. Uncertainty dogs it, a lack of hope, belief in the impossibility of achieving one's desires. The motif of travelling is the metaphor for his life.

The next volume of Khālīd ar-Rāshīd's poetry, *Munamnam* (*Miscellanies*), comprises a single poem presenting the poet's thoughts on the life of man. This is equally in the form of poetic prose – *qaṣīdat an-nathr*. The work breathes with the simple directness of the lyrical revealing of the literary I:

*Each woman is a single leaf
Plucked from paradise.
Every day I am granted this paradise,
I cannot be alone.*²⁰⁴

The gift from God – the beauty of nature, of landscapes is sufficient reason for satisfaction:

*At times I come every day,
To greet the apple trees
On the hill:
Good morning, beautiful trees!*²⁰⁵
*Oh you river,
Which steals my tears...
Oh if you only could see!*²⁰⁶

Poetic reflection concerns not only nature, but also internal order and spiritual balance:

*I am he who desires
To be in the labyrinth of the desert.
I want for it to bestow me with shade.
I desire for your eyes to see me,
To illuminate my nights,
When I am alone
Without a name...*²⁰⁷

An optimistic attitude, one full of acceptance of the world, love and oneself is visible in other fragments of the volume:

*I am he deserted by women
And all the songs.*²⁰⁸
*Love is like a qaṣīda –
Utter it straightaway,
Just as soon as it settles in the heart.*²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Khālīd ar-Rāshīd, *Munamnam*, Abū Ḥabī 2009, p. 9.

²⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

The author closes the volume with the statement:

*The poet who dies in his bed longing.
What
Can be said?*²¹⁰

Khālīd ar-Rāshīd's poems may be read at the lower semantic level, where they marvel the reader with their imagery and mood, as equally they may be tackled on a higher plane, revealing layers of interesting allusions and autobiographical elements.

The poems of **Nujūm al-Ghānim** from the volume *Malā'ikat al-ashwāq al- ba'ida* (*The Angels of Distant Longing*) take on an extremely personal character, linked to the need for the expression of man's love and loneliness. The poet is disillusioned, experiences disillusionment, internal dilemmas. She is helpless in the face of the feelings tormenting her:

*She looks into the expanse –
The walls are high,
The sorrows also...*²¹¹

The very short poem *al-Madā* (*Expanse*) is a prognostication of subsequent lyrical utterances setting the self same note of loneliness, sorrow and depression:

*This night is similar to all darknesses,
And is even gloomier*²¹²

Escape from memories is equally a route to relieving oneself of sorrows; something the author emphasises in the poem *Lā adrī mundhu matā* (*I Don't Know Since When*):

*Boisterous recollections kept me
And others which opened a wound in my heart.
Here I am held in these years –
From that very day,
And maybe longer.*²¹³

The poet depicts an interesting image of woman in her poems, one who is disillusioned with life and – first and foremost – is alone. It is difficult for her to accept suffering and pain. True maturity and wisdom should allow one to understand, however, that suffering and a sense of loneliness are written into our life, in which everything has its designated time. We are only truly aware of this when misfortune meets us or those who

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 79.

²¹¹ Nujūm al-Ghānim, *al-Madā*, in: *Malā'ikat al-ashwāq al- ba'ida*, Bayrūt 2008, p. 13.

²¹² Nujūm al-Ghānim, *Hadhihi al-layla*, in: *Malā'ikat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

²¹³ Nujūm al-Ghānim, *Lā adrī mundhu matā*, in: *Malā'ikat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

are close to us. Then there arrives a moment of deep reflection and an attempt to answer the questions tormenting us:

*The angels who suddenly are imprisoned
In the neighbourhood
Fly above the suburbs,
Listening to the trembling of our hearts,
But they do not want to approach,
To hear our stories.
The angels lean over
Our roofs,
To learn our secrets,
But they do not pay attention to our wounds, from which
Blood oozes every night.
They are now departing,
Because they do not want,
The blood to stain their clothes.*²¹⁴

Reading the poem *al-Malā'ika* (*Angels*), one may have the impression that angels do not help people in their earthly wanderings. They do not want to notice the suffering and pain that accompany mortals.

City images belong to the artistic convention chosen by the poet, from her outlook and sensitivity. The texts, whose subject matter is the city, always try to recreate the buzz of life, the social, cultural and civilization changes, the spiritual individuals and collectives.

Nujūm al-Ghānim in the poem *Ḥanīn al-buldān li-sukkānihā* (*The Longing of Countries for Their Inhabitants*) and in part VI of the poem *Malā'ikat al-ghiyāb* (*Angels of Absence*) concretises the image of the city as a soulless and repelling place, in which the idea of crime can develop. Fear and chaos reign:

*When we drove into the towns,
Our souls were seized by fear,
For they felt lost in these narrow streets
And they did not know through which gates to escape.*²¹⁵

*Building, smoke – the city surrounds me.
It treats me indifferently.
The sound of telephones reach me
And news which takes possession of my calm.*²¹⁶

The language of poem imbibes the voices of the streets and city. The said world is not harmony. Anxiety and threats are felt. In the volume we become acquainted with the world through the suffering that is the subsequent dimension of human existence, something that links all people. The author shows that it is difficult to describe her pain

²¹⁴ Nujūm al-Ghānim, *Malā'ika*, in: *Malā'ikat...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 16–17.

²¹⁵ Nujūm al-Ghānim, *Ḥanīn al-buldān li-sukkānihā*, in: *Malā'ikat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

²¹⁶ Nujūm al-Ghānim, *Malā'ikat al-ghiyāb*, part VI, in: *Malā'ikat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

in a human way. For every individual desires love. *Nujūm al-Ghānim* has no intention of drawing easy conclusions. The reader is forced to search for them himself, something that lends great weight to her poems.

Muḥammad al-Mazrūʿī belongs to the young generation of contemporary Emirate poets. His poems written in poetic prose are seemingly incomprehensible, yet the sensitive reader is able to decipher the numerous subtexts, allusions and associations. The poet does not avoid the use of irony, directly stated opinions and foreign word borrowings. He mixes an individually perceived world with universal human problems. Already in the first poem from the volume *Bilā sabab liannanā fuqarāʾ* (*We Are Poor for No Reasons*) he talks of his own problems and feelings:

*It looks like many problems stand before me.
The first of these is passion for everything.
I perceive like as an enemy.*²¹⁷

The poet signals the doubts, uncertainties, the search for his own route. He admits to bitterness and doubts. It seems to him that he is self-sufficient, while everyone requires motivation to be active and a clearly determined moral code of norms. The author senses anxiety and the uncertainty of his fate. Frustration, sorrow and regret grow in him. It seems to him that within him are many feelings unworthy of a man and a tendency to break principles, which is why he allows himself the use of vulgarisms:

*I am a bastard...
Who is called the son of the Third World.*²¹⁸

Most clearly something bad is happening in the poet's heart, something that pushes him towards a chasm. He has perceived an evil which is able to disseminate and grow. Hence man is threatened by a catastrophe, is heading for annihilation.

In a subsequent poem philosophical in character *Kullu shayʾ illa aṭ-ṭaʿām* (*Everything Except for Food*) al-Mazrūʿī asks about the meaning of existence, about the meaning of human life and death:

*– Why do I create myself?
– In order to die like a butterfly?
... and then transform the soul into music
... Is this beauty?*²¹⁹

The poem's significance is imbued with threats and a lack of hope. The poet talks of internal dilemmas, it is almost as if a scream fulfils it. The lyrical I is defenceless, it is easy to corner and subordinate it.

²¹⁷ Muḥammad al-Mazrūʿī, *Yabdū annanī uwājihu mashākil kathīra*, in: *Bilā sabab liannanā fuqarāʾ*, Abū Zabī 2009, p. 11.

²¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

²¹⁹ Muḥammad al-Mazrūʿī, *Kullu shayʾ illa aṭ-ṭaʿām*, in: *Bilā sabab...*, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

In a surrealist world it becomes a medium, as in the poem *Matā badā' dhalika* (*When it Began*):

*Night is passing.
On my shoulders you remain in spirit.
I carry it, and time floats me...
My heart does not sign with joy
For I am in a cage.*²²⁰

The poem expresses being lost, the author's thoughts are unclear, full of undertones. This is not easy lyricism. It requires involvement, associations, penetrating analysis to expose the deep-rooted sense and complex meaning-associative wordplay. Its source are the numerous illusions and more than likely autobiographical elements.

In the poem *Maryam* the author touches on daily matters. He creates poetic images and talks about existentialism, poetry and politics:

*The sufferings of this earth do not result from itself,
For poetic images are insufficient to understand human existence.*²²¹

Muḥammad al-Mazrū'ī takes stock of his life:

*Was I a good friend for myself,
Was I a brother accepted by the family,
An unpredictable father?
My clothes on the bed
Sleep with me.
I never imagined that I would act against my own principles.*²²²

It appears that the poet wants to understand life in his own way. He talks of the loss of hope for a better future for not only do people deceive but life itself is a source of lies. In the poem *Wurūd zarqā'* (*Blue Flowers*) he perceives it thus:

*I do not want to understand that life is surrender.
I do not want to understand that the desire for life is possible without death...
Everything is trickery.
There is no room for hope for the future.*²²³

The subject of the poetic examination is the state of a man who feels the crisis of all values, does not find meaning within life, without success searches for salvation, oblivion and an abating of emotions. The lyrical I raises questions or attempts to get to grips with its doubts. They reveal anxiety, dilemmas and uncertainty. It appears that the lyrical I is plagued by the awareness of his own powerlessness.

²²⁰ Muḥammad al-Mazrū'ī, *Matā badā' dhalika*, in: *Bilā sabab...*, op.cit., pp. 12–23.

²²¹ Muḥammad al-Mazrū'ī, *Maryam*, in: *Bilā sabab...*, op.cit., p. 26.

²²² Muḥammad al-Mazrū'ī, *A'mal fī maṣna' li-l-athāth*, in: *Bilā sabab...*, op.cit., p. 27.

²²³ Muḥammad al-Mazrū'ī, *Wurūd zarqā'*, in: *Bilā sabab...*, op.cit., p. 42.

On the poetic plane Muḥammad al-Mazrū‘ī appears as an independent creator, capable of counteracting the fashions generally in force, preserving his own vision of poetry.

Al-Hanūf Muḥammad is the author of the volumes of poetry *as-Samāwāt* (*The Heavens*) and *Judrān* (*Walls*). The last volume contains thirty four short poems that deal with the subjects of love, motherhood, death and passing as well as the search for one's own route in life and the search for God. The volume is dedicated by the author to *the child that one day may be born, parents and all the mothers of the world*.²²⁴

Al-Hanūf Muḥammad refers in many of the texts to God, who is able to understand the human essence:

*So you could roam aimlessly,
So you could doubt in the paganism of the things surrounding you,
So you could cry out:
Oh good Lord – you understand me!*²²⁵

For God is the best guardian, while man is his beloved child. The poet expresses great trust in man and the wisdom and goodness of the Lord:

*I searched therefore for my heart
And found it roaming
In search of a place,
Where it could give praise to God.*²²⁶

Here there appears the motif of the search for one's own route in life, one's own consciousness. This process, during which the human personality and his notion of the world are formed. The system of man's values, according to which he has evaluated the world, undertaken future decisions and made judgements, is a subject of unusual currency in the contemporary Arab world, torn between tradition and contemporariness. In a world which finds itself on the route to discovering its own cultural identity, at the threshold of discovering an answer to the most important questions that concern its essence: what is his place in the modern world? What role is played out in him by God, the family?

The poet pays homage to God as the all-mighty creator, without whom nothing would have occurred on Earth. Poems are an expression of joyous belief, bringing happiness and peace, and in moments of trial – solace and comfort:

*I searched for God
And found Him in my heart.*²²⁷

²²⁴ Al-Hanūf Muḥammad, *Judrān*, ash-Shāriqa 2005, p. 5.

²²⁵ Al-Hanūf Muḥammad, 'Ibāda, in: *Judrān*, op.cit., p. 21.

²²⁶ Al-Hanūf Muḥammad, *Bath*, in: *Judrān*, op.cit., p. 8.

²²⁷ *Ibidem*.

The poet is interested in the female psyche, hence the number of descriptions of her experiences. The family is the most important, it constitutes the basis of life, a place of shelter, a safe haven, as well as the highest moral determinant, not only for a woman but for each and every member of the community.

The author examines the subject of motherhood as an important element in the female psyche, of femininity as a whole, of life, the passing of time:

Desolation...

A woman does not know,

How many of her prayers and how much motherhood remain

It is said,

That motherhood is a fabric,

*Joy, death, silken materials.*²²⁸

The merciless flow of time is one of the subjects that trouble the poet:

The day was naked

*With the exception of the hands of time.*²²⁹

The day is naked, and therefore empty, without purpose, only the hands of the clock, those that mark time, gives it any meaning whatsoever, ticking off the moment, fulfilling with the same the emptiness of the day. But also the naked day is that about which we know nothing. The day which is a puzzle and which may bring with it many things. With the said guaranteed is the flowing, passing of time, the passing of the moments:

Dream... dreams are like ammunition.

We dream often and long,

During our short death

Time sparkles and flashes,

The sand sifts...

*The ashes are absence.*²³⁰

Sleep and dream are compared to a small arsenal in which we can regenerate and stock up on our stores of strength as if they were ammunition. It is also connected with the mysterious stage of subconsciousness, recalling, possibly death. The relentlessly flowing away of time, the flickering like a small flame, can be extinguished forever. The sand running in an hourglass raises reflection on the subject of the transience, the brittleness and perishability of human life. The ashes symbolize the absence of those who have passed on:

And when I die

I will lie

Possibly

With one leg on another,

²²⁸ Al-Hanūf Muḥammad, 'Umūma, in: *Judrān, op.cit.*, pp. 2–13.

²²⁹ Al-Hanūf Muḥammad, *Thāniyya*, in: *Judrān, op.cit.*, p. 23.

²³⁰ Al-Hanūf Muḥammad, *Ajzā'*, in: *Judrān, op.cit.*, p. 25.

*Ready,
To arise proudly
On the Day of Judgement.*²³¹

This is a fragment freely presenting considerations on the subject of death, and in particular what will happen afterwards: peace and rest, freedom, a lack of duties and stress in the wait for the Last Judgement in the face of God.

Poets have always tried to define what is poetry. They consider their own work, define their achievements, formulate artistic programmes and often call their considerations by means of the Latin term *ars poetica*. Al-Hanūf Muḥammad belongs to those who seek the essence of poetry:

*A pinch of joy
Thanks to poetry,
The whole of my gratitude for her;
Night, a piece of paper and a pen,
Worry, visions, kisses, whispers,
A wept tear, motherhood.*²³²

Poetry takes hold of the poet's soul, and at times even influences his life. It is not only carefree joy, but also pain. The poet hopes that her poems will constitute a means of understanding amongst people:

*These free words,
I am not able to hold them or lock them up.*²³³

Al-Hanūf Muḥammad's work is deeply rooted in a sea of existential problems, though within religious questions as well, questions that concern the highest of truths. Reading her texts develops reflection and ruminations on the subject of human existence, death and the passing of time.

Ḥārib az-Zāhirī can be bravely called a poet of love. His volumes of erotic verse: *Qubla 'alā khadd al-qamar* (*A Kiss on the Cheek of the Moon*) and *Shams shafatayki* (*The Sun of Your Lips*) comprehensively deals with the subject of love capable of overcoming every obstacle, facing up to each and every contradiction.

The poem examines the subject of separation in the poem *Fatāt al-ghilāf* (*The Cove Girl*). The lyrical I is hurting: the strength of love was too much for him to defend himself. The desired woman disappears from the field of vision and returns only in recollections, dreams and fantasies:

²³¹ Al-Hanūf Muḥammad, *Mithāliyyāt*, in: *Judrān, op.cit.*, p. 28.

²³² Al-Hanūf Muḥammad, *Mufradāt*, in: *Judrān, op.cit.*, p. 11.

²³³ *Ibidem*.

*There is nothing left for me,
There is nothing left...
Except the echo of your voice
Trembling.
The nectar of your love
Has already left.*²³⁴

Reminiscences of love constantly return in the poem *Shurfat al-ḥubb* (*The Terrace of Love*):

*You are my soul,
You are my groans,
You embrace the dancing minutes of the night.
[...]
I see you from afar like an instrument,
Which gathers its strings and longings.*²³⁵

In the poems contained in the volume under discussion the most important are feelings, sensations, spiritual states – defining the perspective of a woman viewed by a man in love, whose view of the world has long been shaped by deep felt love.

Already the first poems of the volume *Shams shafatayki* (*The Sun of Your Lips*) show that the love theme will be continued. In eroticism full of tears *Shahiyyat al-ḥubb* (*Appetite for Love*) the lyrical I despairs over his lost love:

*Love distanced itself,
But we still stand in the windows,
We cry together with the night.
Our love is wounded by stories,
Embroidered with stars
And sins...*²³⁶

Udhri love (platonic love) has inspired Arabic poets and writers for many epochs. The feelings of the most famous pair of lovers: Majnūn and Laylā, Jamīl and Buthayna, Qays and Lubna were outside of their will and control; eternally. No one and nothing was able to destroy them. This was a perfect and total feeling, connected with suffering and madness. Ḥārib az-Zāhirī in his love poems many times refers to it:

*Evening plays on the string,
Giving of the voice of Udhri love
With the certainty it was you*²³⁷

*Merely love,
After it there is nothing.*

²³⁴ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Fatāt al-ghilāf*, in: *Qubla 'alā khadd al-qamar*, Abū Zabī 1999, p. 15.

²³⁵ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Shurfat al-ḥubb*, in: *Qubla 'alā ...*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

²³⁶ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Shahiyyat al-ḥubb*, in: *Shams shafatayki*, Abū Zabī 2002, p. 9.

²³⁷ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Ikhlāl fī 'unuqī*, in: *Shams...*, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

*It is elevated on high,
And the sun of your love
Shines with a gentle breeze...*²³⁸

*Her magic shines like the sun,
Summons
The stars on your face*

[...]

*The blackness of your eyes
Flashes like pearls,
Flooding with beauty.*²³⁹

Night is “a hideaway” for people and a time of rest... for the mystics it signifies waiting.²⁴⁰ In the poem *Dam ‘a ‘alā khadd as-sarāb (A Tear on the Cheek of a Mirage)* night appears as a symbol of love, hope and freedom. The poet addresses it with the words:

*Oh you night,
You are the altar of the lovers.
I adore to travel in the stars,
Contemplating in the cradle of love.
I look in the direction of the groves,
Searching for my beloved.*²⁴¹

Love is the most important of the topics covered by Ḥārib az-Zāhirī. Love for a woman often represents contradictory desires. Most clearly the poet is unable to exist without this feeling, which fulfils an internal void. His poems are a lyrical noting down of love, a reflection of its changeability, the hopes and fears associated with it. The lyrical I experiences violent passion, while the intense feelings become a source of suffering. Ḥārib az-Zāhirī carries inside him an image of an ideal woman, from which he is unable to free himself.

The world should be created anew, for at present disorder reigns. Someone must order reality, return meaning to words and concepts, and to man the ability to differentiate good from bad. This difficult challenge is taken up by **Maysūn Ṣaqr** in the volume *Armalat qāṭi' ṭariq (The Highwayman's Widow)*.

The 21st century has not changed the world. It has not given answers to important questions. It is still not known how one is to live. Answers are known to no one, neither

²³⁸ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Al-awḥad ḥubbuki*, in: *Shams...*, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

²³⁹ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Qubla ar-rūḥ*, in: *Shams...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 46–47.

²⁴⁰ Marek Dziekan, *Symbolika...*, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

²⁴¹ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Dam ‘a ‘alā khadd as-sarāb*, in: *Shams...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 21–22.

ordinary mortals nor poets. The latter can merely help in the asking of questions and the giving of warnings:

*In a world which does not pay attention to any value
Except for violence directed against the Third World,
Who's interested?
This world is full of the poetry of violence.*²⁴²

The poet cannot be indifferent. He must be a witness of his times, revolt and call others to revolt as well.

Death is always a source of terror. Everyone carries with him the conviction that he is heading in the direction of his final day. The poet's fondness for the scenery of death creating an atmosphere of eeriness and threat, out of which grow fear and terror is presented in the poetic cycle *Şundūq al-mayyit (The Coffin)*. In all of these poems there appear: death, cemeteries and coffins.

And so in the poem *Bilā amkina wa lā shawāhid (Without a Place and Without Witnesses)* the poet tries to influence all the reader's senses at the same time:

*The coffin was smaller than the corpse,
Narrower than the vastness of death and sorrows.
It has the four corners of a Chinese tree
And is hammered down with strong nails.*²⁴³

The passing away of time inescapably leads to death, little in the way of material traces remain of those who have passed on. The strength of the poet's imagination in the description of death is visible in the subsequent poem in the cycle entitled *Laqad fa'ltahā min qabl (You already Did This Earlier)*:

*Her corpse lay close to a rose
Which was withered and cut,
Like the body of a bird which had spread its wings
And flown away, escaping from the cage
It fell, shot by a single bullet,
Next to the rose with the severed hand.*²⁴⁴

When we read poems about death we react to them in a similar way: disbelief in their realness, the irreconcilability, helplessness, the sense of being lost, sorrow, the sensation of emptiness.

The history of the world is an unending story, from which we cannot escape. Man as a unit has no influence whatsoever on the course of the events around. He is helpless. He is forced to live in a world overcome with evil. In the title poem of the next cycle *Taḥta zill khayma (In the Shade of the Tent)*, Maysun creates an image of loss and loneliness:

²⁴² Maysūn Ṣaqr, *Man yuhimmuhu al-amr*, in: *Armalat qāṭi' tarīq*, al-Qāhira 2007, p. 16.

²⁴³ Maysūn Ṣaqr, *Bilā amkina wa lā shawāhid*, in: *Armalat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

²⁴⁴ Maysūn Ṣaqr, *Laqad fa'ltahā min qabl*, in: *Armalat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

*O Lord,
The Universe is so immense,
And I am here alone!
I hide in the shade of a ruined tent.
How could I hide in the shade of a ruined tent in this loss
Right until morn?*²⁴⁵

In the next poem, *Anā waḥdī al-qīṭṭatu hunā (I Am Alone, but the Cat Is Here)*, the poet feels betrayed. She desires revenge on the man who has left her. She refers to him in the third person – *huwa*:

*A kinjal was thrust into his heart,
His blood exploded on my face,
I drink it for the health of revenge.
I open my eyes, which are painted in kohl, and I say:
I will learn evil,
I will learn to be the wife of a highwayman.*²⁴⁶

At the basis of Maysūn Ṣaqr's poetry lies respect for her own past. In subsequent poems there lurks the wisdom, experience and traditions that are the essence of the Emirates. The author writes therefore about the sea, which lasts eternally, in a similar way to the land that brings forth the palms. For these give shade to the inhabitants, feed them with their fruit and protect them in tents covered in leaves. The sea is the source of prosperity and a window onto the world. Everyone must therefore take it upon themselves to defend the sea, the desert and the palms, for this is equivocal to defending one's home, one's family:

*She sits in the tent,
She drinks her coffee from the hand of the slave Salum.
The desert is alive with the neighing of horse
And the movement of camels.*

[...]

*Nothing has changed,
For centuries they sit the same.
The tent is silent,
And the tribes leave their camps and later return.
They wander in the depth of the desert,
And the ships on the sea fight with the vessels of the enemy.
They did not bring pearls, only slaves who prepare coffee.*²⁴⁷

The last poem of the volume, *Idrāk al-qīma (Grasping values)*, brings hope and optimism:

²⁴⁵ Maysūn Ṣaqr, *Taḥta ḡill khayma*, in: *Armalat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

²⁴⁶ Maysūn Ṣaqr, *Anā waḥdī al-qīṭṭatu hunā*, in: *Armalat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

²⁴⁷ Maysūn Ṣaqr, *Ṣinā 't al-qahwā*, in: *Armalat...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 69–70.

*I put on the coat of hope,
I will wait a moment in the palm of time...*²⁴⁸

Maysūn Ṣaqr poems are a source for reflection. One may gain the impression that the poet is searching, through her work, for a route to understand her very self. She presents the loneliness of a man lost in the backstreets of life in the modern world.

Aḥmad al-‘Asam is, for the young Emirate generation, a witness of his own times. He thinks and conveys his message through the poetic prose of *qaṣīdat an-nathr*. Amongst the many motifs contained in the volume *Yahduth hadhā faqaṭ* (*Only That Will Happen*) yearning, solitude and dreams are pushed to the fore.

The poem *Hanīn ad-dafātir* (*The Yearning of the Exercise Books*) is an emotive work, which in a short form condenses many of the lyrical I’s observations:

*What does a man do...
Who every night enjoys his loneliness?!*²⁴⁹

The lyrical I is disillusioned with the reality which does not meet with his desires and yearnings, but which strives to subordinate him to destiny. He feels lonely, as is expressed in the poem *Hanīn qadīm...* (*Former Yearning...*):

*Here...
I sit enveloped by my former longing...
My pain is old... And does not relent!!
I wait for a woman, who rests in my imagination...
It shakes me strongly...
Draws my recollections.*²⁵⁰

In the next verse, *Timthāl...* (*Statue...*), from the cycle *Qafza ghayr muktamila* (*The Unfinished Leap*) he writes:

*I stand alone
Like a public telephone...
Broken...
A statue!?*²⁵¹

In the cycle of the extremely short poems *Sabāḥāt mutafajjira fī damī* (*Mornings Which Exploded in My Blood*) we sense loss, helplessness and an oppressive sorrow. The cycle is a reflective and philosophical depiction of the poet’s message:

²⁴⁸ Maysūn Ṣaqr, *Idrāk al-qīma*, in: *Armalat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 174.

²⁴⁹ Aḥmad al-‘Asam, *Hanīn ad-dafātir*, in: *Yahduth hadhā faqaṭ*, Abū Ṣabī – ash-Shāriqa 2008, p. 31.

²⁵⁰ Aḥmad al-‘Asam, *Hanīn qadīm...*, in: *Yahduth...*, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

²⁵¹ Aḥmad al-‘Asam, *Timthāl*, in: *Yahduth...*, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

*What I dream of...
Is a wall
From which fly off
All the sparrows!!*²⁵²

There are short verse-thoughts in the volume, which create a certain vision of reality:

*Thank you, oh Lord...
You give and take away life!!
Thank You, oh father...
From whom I have inherited patience!!*²⁵³
...

*If I ever open it...
– the chest – ...
I will be given the hand by...
A creditor,
A beggar
And...!!*²⁵⁴

*On a crystal
Table...
Honest people broke down...
And the servants
Clapped!!*²⁵⁵

Aḥmad al-‘Asam uses question marks, ellipsis, which present the anxiety, quandaries, uncertainties, loss. The tearing off of a sentence, sentence fragments, individual words complicate the rhythm. The poems disturb the sense of peace and present the doubts troubling the author and people in general.

The volume *Khāzinat al-faraḥ* (*The Female Treasurer of Joy*) by **Wafā Khāzandār** comprises poems imbued with truth on who we are and intend to become. The poet directs herself with distance to the world and people, but also expresses the suffering of loneliness and the desire for love. In the poem *Imra‘a ukhrā* (*Another Woman*) we read:

*I will come to you
Dressed in the vestments of night
[...]*

²⁵² Aḥmad al-‘Asam, *Sabāḥāt mutafajjira fī damī*, in: *Yaḥduth...*, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

²⁵³ Aḥmad al-‘Asam, *Şifa...*[in:] *Yaḥduth...*, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

²⁵⁴ Aḥmad al-‘Asam, *Barīd*, in: *Yaḥduth...*, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

²⁵⁵ Aḥmad al-‘Asam, *Mā‘ida...*, in: *Yaḥduth...*, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

*I will remain alone with the bird
That was killed
In the fields of wheat*

[...]

*I will surely look like another woman,
Who cuddles despair.²⁵⁶*

In another work, *A 'alam annaka sata'ti (I Know You'll Come)*, love causes the pain and suffering of unsatisfied feelings:

*I know that you will come.
My heart groans,
The world melts between my hands.*

[...]

My mother said: the misfortune of love has come.²⁵⁷

The title poem *Khāzinat al-farah* (*The Female Treasurer of Joy*) describes the world in a surrealist way. According to Wafā' Khāzandār the only thing that has been bequeathed us is our body. Experiencing its sufferings, we experience at the same time the presence of the soul, which cooperates with the body in an inseparable way:

*In the frost of distant sands
You will find my head close by,
But sometimes you will not find it.
I look for the body in a cupboard
A chest in which I could have hidden it.
I search for myself.²⁵⁸*

In a later part of the poem the author asks why she is sorrowful and worried:

*Joy does not suit me
So therefore sorrow will clothe me?
Despite the fog of unrest
The ask decays
I don't know...
If this is the dust of a butterfly or the wings of a tear.²⁵⁹*

At the end of the volume is to be found a cycle that is a record of the poet's thoughts, *Madārāt (Orbits)*:

*An ear has the colour of gold,
Quiet gives me warmth.*

²⁵⁶ Wafā' Khāzandār, *Imra'a ukhrā*, in: *Khāzinat al-farah*, Abū Ḥabī 2009, pp. 25–26.

²⁵⁷ Wafā' Khāzandār, *A 'alam annaka sata'ti*, in: *Khāzinat...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 17–18.

²⁵⁸ Wafā' Khāzandār, *Khāzinat al-farah*, in: *Khāzinat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

²⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

She does not know me,

But in every season she casts her grain.²⁶⁰
And what would be if the wronged wrote history?
It would be interesting if its course changed?!²⁶¹

A party starts:
They plunge into the mud, leaning over,
And the hungry fill their stomachs and hands.²⁶²

These short poems are comprised of a series of visions that present various aspects of reality. The poems are prose in form *qaṣīdat an-nathr*. She is not able to live without hope and meaning in what she does. Wafā' Khāzandār puts herself forward in the role of an evaluator and defender of the weak and simple. Poetry as a witness is indestructible.

The whole of **Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī's** output is saturated with love for the homeland, with her poems in the volume *Ṣahīl Khaḍrā* (*Khadra's Neighing*) being a passionate patriotic declaration. A boundless admiration for the already deceased leader – Zayed – is expressed by the panegyric *Ḥubb al-waṭan* (*Love for the Fatherland*):

These are the Emirates
Bearing the standard Zayed.
In the heart remains...
The standard borne by falcons.
Fluttering above the horizon...
Announcing love for the fatherland,
The dearest fatherland...²⁶³

The falcon mentioned in the poem is the symbol of the Emirates. It also signifies pride, chivalry, nobleness and majesty.²⁶⁴ In the poem's subsequent fragments the author returns to the past. She describes the difficult life of the inhabitants of the Emirates before the discovery of oil:

Suffering... Pain
Eyes look to the future.
The most beautiful melodies
Are sung by nahama.²⁶⁵

[...]

²⁶⁰ Wafā' Khāzandār, 'Atā', in: *Khāzinat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

²⁶¹ Wafā' Khāzandār, *Tarikh*, in: *Khāzinat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

²⁶² Wafā' Khāzandār, *Ḥaḥla*, in: *Khāzinat...*, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

²⁶³ Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī, *Ḥubb al-waṭan*, in: *Ṣahīl Khaḍrā*, Dubayy 2008, p. 81.

²⁶⁴ Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik symboli*, Warszawa 1990, p. 394.

²⁶⁵ Nahama – people of the sea (sailors, divers) singing folk poetry.

*This arouses in the soul
 Recollections mixed
 With joy and sorrow*

[...]

*Despite the storm and winds
 The children and mothers wait
 For the return of their beloved...*²⁶⁶

In the verse under discussion there is no lack of reference to the thirty sixth anniversary of the unification of the Emirates. It is not by chance that a nightingale and date palm appear. The former is the desire for freedom, while the date palm, as one of God's gifts, symbolises riches, generosity, goodness:

*Nightingales singing for the
 Earth and fatherland
 The most beautiful melody!
 Thirty six ears
 Embrace the date palm,
 They create an image of love and longing*²⁶⁷

Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī's next poems are undoubtedly an example of involved poetry, while their creator joins with words the fight for the Palestinian cause. She condemns the silence of the Arabs who do not defend the Palestinians. In the poem *Samā 'al-janūb* (*The Skies of Southern Lebanon*) she describes the massacre at Qāna in the Lebanon.

*Lips that tremble with fear
 Shout...
 Where are you, Arabs?!
 The reply is unheard...
 All sit in silence.
 No one lifts a finger.
 The lips call...
 Fatherland,
 Which is already disappearing before our eyes.
 The lips call to those who survived the Qana massacre.*²⁶⁸

In the poem *Lan ansā* (*I Won't Forget*) Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī makes reference to the poem of the eminent Palestinian poet Fadwā Tūqqān of the same title. She writes about Palestine, urging the resistance and defence of Jerusalem:

*Forward!
 Fight... Fight!*

²⁶⁶ Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī, *Hubb al-waṭan*, in: *Ṣahīl Khaḍrā*, *op.cit.*, pp. 78–79.

²⁶⁷ Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī, *Hubb al-waṭan*, in: *Ṣahīl Khaḍrā*, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

²⁶⁸ Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī, *Samā 'al-janūb*, in: *Ṣahīl Khaḍrā*, *op.cit.*, pp. 20–21.

Throw a stone... and forward!
O! Stones of wrath, strike!
Destroy... the walls of fear!
My land is my blood... and honour.
*Don't surrender... I fight*²⁶⁹

The poet identifies herself with the Arabs inhabiting the south of Lebanon:

Here...
Was southern
Lebanon
My mother...
My land,
My fatherland.
Take care... Take care!
Oh, there they come!
They are coming,
To destroy the land
*And its honour.*²⁷⁰

The poet does not accept any manifestations of terrorism in the world. She calls for peace:

Kiss the fatherland
And abandon the killing of souls.
Cast a rose for peace... for peace.
Oh your Jordanian land,
*Oh land of the Arabs.*²⁷¹

Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī's poems are a message for Arab brotherhood. They are an appeal which must be noticed by all and understood.

The lyricism of 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb is a tangle of meanings, contrasts and references. The lyrical I in the poems from the volume *Lā aḥad* (*No One*) wanders, doubts, searches for his own route in order to discover the meaning of life and love. Already in the poem *Matāha* (*The Labyrinth*), from the first pages of the volume, he speaks of pain, weakness and imperfections.

Yesterday
I wrote nothing,
Today I did not write,

²⁶⁹ Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī, *Lan ansā*, in: *Ṣahīl Khaḍrā*, *op.cit.*, pp. 85–86.

²⁷⁰ Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī, *Samā' al-janūb*, in: *Ṣahīl Khaḍrā*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

²⁷¹ Jamīla ar-Ruwayhī, *Urs ad-damm*, in: *Ṣahīl Khaḍrā*, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

*Today is the same as yesterday.
 Tomorrow...
 What can one expect from tomorrow's day?
 Unknown,
 A labyrinth.
 What will tomorrow bring
 A man thinner than a match,
 Which is not enough to light a cigarette?
 Life is already intolerable.²⁷²*

In the majority of poems of 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb death is perceived in various ways, although it always is an inescapable thing:

*In the room,
 Which recalled a tomb,
 Where there is no one except me,
 I smoke the last cigarette
 And start to sing:
 You oh daughter of the sun,
 I am ill
 Death has arrived at my room.²⁷³*

*Will I return?
 Not so as to sleep,
 But in order to die
 Just like the day that is dying.²⁷⁴*

In the poem *Sha'ruḥā aṭ-ṭawīl al-mumazzaq (Her Long Ruffled Hair)* death is accompanied by recollections of love. The poet expresses his relations to higher values so:

*How sweet life is
 With a woman
 With long hair!
 I have experienced love.
 No one knocks on the door,
 No one comes.
 I have forgotten about my shape,
 Of death²⁷⁵*

The poem *al-Ḥayā munjadhība min rumūshihā (Life Is Drawn Through Her Eyelashes)* is full of sorrow. The lyrical I feels lonely and alienated. Uncertainty torments him. He does not want to agree to human nothingness:

²⁷² 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Matāha*, in: *Lā aḥad*, Abū Ḥabīb 2009, p. 11.

²⁷³ 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Ughniya*, in: *Lā aḥad*, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

²⁷⁴ 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Rajulān fī ghurfā*, in: *Lā aḥad*, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

²⁷⁵ 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb, *Sha'ruḥā aṭ-ṭawīl al-mumazzaq*, in: *Lā aḥad*, *op.cit.*, pp. 60–61.

There
Where there is no room,
I sit alone
On the bed, isolated,
I light my pipe with a pistol
And with white eyes
I look out for my beautiful death,
Leaving behind me
*A burning planet.*²⁷⁶

In the next poem *Waqt* (Time) the lyrical I speaks of how it feels alone, misunderstood, and even unneeded:

On the edge of abyss,
Without sky,
Without earth,
Without a beloved,
Time breaks the back.
The wind does not look back,
*And despair has already reached its zenith.*²⁷⁷

The poems of ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Wahāb deal with the questions of the human fate and destiny that touch all. Life’s journey is accompanied by the difficult, bitter awareness of the inevitable end. Death appears as something natural. It does not constitute a cause for revolt or a source of despair. The language of this lyricism is natural, often informal even colloquial, devoid of artificial constructions, which favours the application of the poetic prose of *qaṣīdat an-nathr*.

²⁷⁶ ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Wahāb, *al-Ḥayā munjadhība min rumūshihā*, in: *Lā aḥad*, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

²⁷⁷ ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Wahāb, *Waqt*, in: *Lā aḥad*, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

Part Two

Modern Short Story Writing of the United Arab Emirates

Prose – Introduction

The development of prose in the United Arab Emirates occurred much later than in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia or Bahrain. Cultural literary periodicals from abroad started to arrive here only at the beginning of the 1970s. The local press started to develop in a dynamic way at the end of the 1960s. The author of the first short story *Qulūb la tarḥam* (*Merciless Hearts*), which was published at the end of the 1960s, was ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirī. He also wrote at the same time the first collection of short stories in the history of Emirate literature. It was entitled *al-Khashaba* (*A Piece of Wood*). However it was not to reach readers as it was burnt because of its contents, which were full of biting criticism of the British, and the English occupation.²⁷⁸

The first literary attempts of the young generation of Emirate writers were published within the pages of the following periodicals: **an-Naṣr**, **az-Zamālik**, **ash-Shabāb**, **al-Ahlī**. After gaining independence in 1971 there occurred a rapid development of schooling. In 1977 the Al-‘Ain University was founded.

On the market there appeared the journal **al-Ittiḥād**, the weekly **Akhbār Dubayy** and the monthly **al-Majma’**.²⁷⁹ The first stage in the history of contemporary Emirate literature is constituted by a group of young writers who appeared in the years 1972–1975. Amongst the young creators the following are worthy of note: ‘Alī ‘Ubayd ‘Alī – the author of the short stories *al-Jazā’* (*Punishment*), *Daḥīya aṭ-ṭama’* (*The Victim of Greed*), *Jaḥīm* (*Hell*), *Hadhā huwa al-ḥubb* (*Such is Love*) and *Layl bilā akhar* (*Night without End*), Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Mirī – the author of the short stories *Yawm fī ḥayāt muwaḥḥaf ṣaghūr* (*A Day in the Life of an Ordinary Civil Servant*) and *‘Ābir sabīl* (*The Traveller*), ‘Abd al-Azīz Khalīl – from whose pen came the short story *Min ajli waladī* (*For My Son*) as well as ‘Abd al-Ḥamid Aḥmad – author of works such as *al-Farār* (*Escape*) and *Khalḥ al-bāb al-mughlaq* (*Behind Closed Doors*).²⁸⁰

The years 1975–1979 were a period of infatuation with wealth and material goods which is why on the book market there did not appear too many new titles. The following *ash-Shaqā’* (*Labour*) written by ‘Abd al-Azīz ash-Sharḥān deserves inclusion amongst these few. The works which it contains are the conclusions and experiences of the author from his period of study abroad. Moreover the yearning for his country has borne fruit in stories concerning the life and work of people at sea. At the same time Ismā‘īl Sha‘ban ‘Alī and ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Nūr made their debut publishing their works within the pages of **Akhbār Dubayy** and **al-Ahlī**.

²⁷⁸ *Multaqā al-awwal li-l-kitābāt al-qaṣaṣiyya wa ar-riwāiyya fī dawlat al-Imārāt al-‘arabiyya al-muttaḥida* (*Materials from the First Meeting of Short Story Writers and Novelists in the United Arab Emirates*), Dā‘irat ath-thaqāfa wa al-‘alām, ash-Shāriqa 1989, p. 15.

²⁷⁹ At present there are available on the market newspapers such as *al-Ittiḥād*, *al-Fajr*, *al-Waḥda* published in Abū Zābi, *al-Bayān* published in Dubayy or *al-Khalīj* in ash-Shāriqa.

²⁸⁰ *Multaqā al-awwal...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 16–17.

The year 1979 was a special one for writers in the Arab Emirates, for there were founded many cultural societies including cultural social clubs in Abū Zābi and ash-Shārja. Moreover literary evenings were organised there where the works of contemporary writers were presented, together with cultural exhibitions promoting the works of young artists. The **al-Azmanā al-‘arbiyya** periodical was created.

In the short stories of this period there dominates a social subject matter. Problems of man’s freedom and his place in society, the discovery of crude oil and its influence on the everyday life of the inhabitants of the Emirates are discussed. There were published many new collections of short stories including: **al-Khurūj ‘alā washm al-qabīla** (*Breaking Out of the Tribal Tradition*) written by Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Ḥarbī, **as-Sibāḥa fī ‘aynī khalīj yatawāḥash** (*Bathing in the Eyes of the Wild Gulf*) by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad, **Dhaliḳa az-zamān** (*Those Times*), **Zalla al-‘adhārā** (*The Mistakes of the Maidens*) by ‘Abd al-Riḍā as-Sajwānī, **Ḥubb min naw‘ akhar** (*A Different Kind of Love*), **al-Furṣa al-akhīra** (*Last Chance*) and **Ṣadāqa** (*Friendship*) written by Muḥammad al-Murr.

According to Dr. Diyā’a aṣ-Ṣadiqī a literary work is composed of three elements: the creative personality of the author, pictures from life and elements determining the relation between the author’s own ego and the subject he has undertaken.²⁸¹

‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad divided the development of the short story in the Emirates into four stages:

- stage one – the initial one, the end of the 1960s. The main representative here is ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī and his collection of short stories **al-Khashaba** (*A Piece of Wood*),
- the second stage called the stage of continuity in which new writers make their debuts,
- the third stage is a period of cultural stagnation and a weakening of activity among short story writers,
- while stage four lasts from the end of the 1970s to the present day and is characterised by a constant development of culture.²⁸²

Emirate writers examine in their works the subject of the past. This is linked to the subject of the sea and its influence on the lives of the inhabitants. Writers equally explore the life of the inhabitants of the desert, countryside and the old Emirate districts, describing their traditions and customs, though equally not avoiding contemporary subject matters connected with the discovery of crude oil and the construction of superb municipalities. So by way of an example ‘Alī Muḥammad Rāshid in the short story **Rijāl fī miḥna** (*Men in Sorrow*) tells of sailors: the captain of a ship and his son who deal in pearls. The culminating point being the death of the captain which leads to conflict between the sailors and his son against the back cloth of the division of the pearls.

A story abounding in descriptions: of the sea, of children’s games and the customs of the inhabitants is Sa’īd Sālim al-Ḥankī’s work entitled **‘Abd Allah aṣ-ṣaghīr...waṣīya** (*Ad-*

²⁸¹ Diyā’a aṣ-Ṣadiqī, article *Al-bi’a al-maḥalliyya fī al-qīṣṣa al-qaṣīra fī al-Imārāt*, in: *Multaqā al-awwal li-l-kitābāt al-qaṣaṣiyya wa ar-riwāiyya fī dawlat al-Imārāt al-‘arabiyya al-muttaḥida* (*Proceedings of the First Meeting of Short Story Writers and Novelists in the United Arab Emirates*), Dā’irat ath-thaqāfa wa al-‘alām, ash-Shāriqa 1989, pp. 153–154.

²⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 158.

vice for Little 'Abd Allah). The subject for the story is the rebellion of the main hero Ibn Zahir, who is a fisherman on the ship Husayn.

Colonialism together with the artificial economic and social division in the Emirates is the subject of the short story *Yawm aḥissu bihi annahu ya'īshu* (*The Day I Feel Alive in*) written by Jum'ā al-Fayrūz. This short story is a registration of the unwritten history of the region.

The countryside and its problems have been touched on in the short story *al-Jarrād* (*Locust*) by Nāṣir az-Zahirī. The author describes a village where abundant rains have fallen, fertilising the soils resulting in vegetation. The joy of the villagers is however shattered by an invasion of locusts which brings with it the appearance of the spectre of famine.

Shidda wātūl (*The Distress Which Passes*) written by Nāṣir Jubrān is the story of a child called Jama'an, who finds a tin can on the shore. He wants to make a water holder for birds out of it, yet a fire breaks out in his home caused by the tin which contains a deadly substance. This is confirmed by the English officers who come to Jama'an's house.

The discovery of oil brought about many changes in the traditional social structure of the Emirates. Citizens stood in the face of the 'money-social' conflict. For there had taken place a conflict between the values in force prior to the discovery of crude oil and the values of the new era which results in the fact that the works created at this time dealt with the internal problems between tradition, which is slowly disappearing, and the values which are gradually taking their place. And thus the short story by Ibrāhīm Mubārak entitled *'Āshiq al-baḥr* (*The Sea's Lover*) is saturated with an enormous yearning for the past. It tells of the life of a diver who must abandon his beloved sea. The story is romantic. The reader senses the languish for old time values: for the tents never to be seen again, for the small street cafes, for the traditional bazaars and the old mud buildings.

In another short story entitled *as-Sayyid ḡayr mawjūd* (*The Master is Out*) Nāṣir Jubrān describes the life of three generations: a father living in the past, a son living in the present, and a grandson living in the future. The father lives in the country and works at sea. Despite the son's insistence he does not want to move to the town. The son belongs to the society newly enriching itself, he is educated and wealthy. He lives in a modern house in the town. The father after several visits to his son's house claims that his son's life is saturated with spuriousness, egocentricism and hypocrisy. The son in his talks with his father refers to the poor and beggars with scorn which means that the father feels sadness and regret for the values he instilled in his son and which have completely lost their meaning in the town. The shattered father considers that he has lost a son, yet sees hope in the future generation represented by the grandson.

An interesting short story, which constitutes a protest against the rejection of tradition, is the work entitled *Tufūla wa ḥulm al-qabīla* (*Childhood and the Dreams of the Tribe*) by the female writer Su'ad al-'Arīmī. It presents the life of a man in the new reality as well as the choice attached to it which he must take every day. The hero has moved from the countryside to the town where he has found a job in a government department. His new surroundings mean that he has to change his previous life and customs: his way of dressing and speaking. He had to become used to total subservience towards his superiors, to accept their tiresome and cynical remarks and orders. He was even forced to shave off his beard which had been a symbol of masculinity in his old surroundings. He was unable to accept the new reality and as a consequence committed suicide. This

act is an expression of the condemnation for the new reality, a rejection of the new social relations and principles based on material gain and hypocrisy.

Contemporariness is understood by Emirate writers as the social, political and economic changes occurring in the town. They are caused by the chances which have yet to take on a concrete form.

Sa'īd Sālim al-Ḥankī in the short story *Humūm al-muwaṭṭin S* (*The Worries of Citizen S*) presents us with the new reality that rules in the newly rich society: falsehood, showiness, unhealthy relationships between people, hypocrisy. In the short story he describes the story of a young educated man who finds work in a government office. The said hero stands before the choice of fulfilling his own whims or those of others. He lives in conflict with those values ingrained in him by his father: not to drink, not to steal, not to commit adultery and not to bribe. However at work daily he meets with bribery, theft and adultery. The author in his short story encloses a message addressed to the old and the new generation. He considers that a lot of time will be necessary for the generations to come closer and to mutually understand one another until which time they will remain gulfs apart.

Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Ḥarbī presents in the short story entitled *Wisām sharaf* (*The Order of Honour*) the nature of the new relationships in work based on greed and the using of man for material gain. The main figure is a workman who spent the best years of his life working in a factory. He spared neither effort nor health to bring about its development. However, when he became older he was weak and started to fall ill and was sacked unfeelingly. The author shows the ruthlessness in relations between employee and employer. He condemns the brutality, cruelty and lack of human reaction brought about by greed and avarice. The short story ends with the hero's tragic death at the work place in full view of his colleagues and other workers. The short story *Bushrā fī as-sittīn* (*Bushra is Sixty*) from the pen of 'Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī shows the negative sides of the reality surrounding us. The author stigmatises the marriage of old men with very young girls who are forced into it by poverty as is the case of the heroine, a young Asian woman. The author is of the view that despite the 'riches' with which Abu al-Ḥasa surrounds his wife she is not happy, for her husband is unable to guarantee her what a husband of the same age would surely guarantee.

'Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad in the short story *Al-Bayḍār* (*The Threshing Floor*) describes the problem of people settling from one country to another in the search for work. They are the so-called citizenless people, for at the beginning of the process of creating states within the area of the Arabian Gulf there was no requirement for identity cards. This problem is characteristic for many countries of the Gulf and in, for instance, Kuwait still remains a problem even today. It is such people who are the heroes of this short story. Maris was by origin an Omani who arrived in the Emirates thirty years before. He worked on the palm plantations, however as a result of the changes occurring he lost his job because he did not possess an identity card to confirm his citizenship. He decided therefore to return to Oman, but was not allowed in as he did not have a passport. Driven to despair he commits suicide.

Safar al-asfār (*The Journey of a Journey*) is a story by Nāṣir az-Zahiri illustrating the Palestinian problem. The main hero travels from Arab country to country in search of work. Finally he achieves his aim and becomes a janitor in a twenty-two storey building.

It is no accident that the building is twenty-two storeys high. For this is the number of Arab countries which are touched by many problems and difficulties as equally becoming involved in various conflicts. In the short story the suffering of the hero abroad is emphasised along with his longing to die and be buried in his own land. The author condemns, and blames, the Arab world for the undoing of the Palestinian nation.

The Palestinian subject matter has found reflection in the short story *Hadhā al-wajh laysa lī* (*The Face is Not Mine*) by Su'ad al-'Arīmī. The writer has also dealt with the subject of the Iran-Iraq war in her short story *Baqāyā damm* (*The Remains of the Blood*).

Despite this it should be emphasised that Emirate writers concentrate chiefly on local issues in their political, social and economic aspects. The social aspect of customs and social relations definitely dominate.

The short stories dealing with the past are characterised by a depressing romanticism. They are defined as “pure and unblemished in comparison with the cruel and dirty present day”.

The short stories that deal with the present day contain criticism of the town. The relationships between people that exist there are based on mutual interest which means that man feels within them lost and alienated. On the one hand he cannot get used to them, while on the other it is difficult for him to dispense with them.

In the Emirates women equally publish their works alongside men. To the better known belong the names: Salmā Maṭar Yūsuf, Laylā Aḥmad, Maryam Jum'a Faraj or Amīna 'Abd Allāh Bū Shihāb.

Salmā Maṭar Yūsuf displays some state or desire to share their own ideas. The main subject matter for her works is woman and her problems. It is around her that the action is concentrated, social relations are played out. Generally she is dependent on someone. In the short story entitled *az-Zahra* (*The Flower*) the woman influences the life of a man. The hero Halfan, as a result of a relationship with a woman, discovers a different, new world which earlier was alien to him. He starts to compare her world with his. The woman's life intrigues him. He tries to think in her categories, to become acquainted with her life situation as well as all those social conditions which limit her freedom.

Another woman writer is Laylā Aḥmad, who is considered to be a representative of a symbolic current. The language of symbols dominates the collection of short stories *al-Ḥayma, al-mahrajān, al-waṭan* (*Tent, Festival, Fatherland*). In the short story entitled *Kanāra* (*Canary*) a woman is the symbol of the fatherland.

Within the pages of her short stories there comes about a conflict between generations, and their strain is dependant on social, economic and political transformations which play a key role in psychological and environmental spheres. These transformations do not remain without influence on the behaviour of generations, which as a consequence leads to differences between them.

Maryam Jum'a Faraj presents in her short stories various aspects of the new reality in the Emirates. In her collection entitled *Fayrūz* (*Fayruz*) she concentrates on the presentation of people of the same generation who are linked by similar life problems.

The writer Amīna 'Abd Allāh Bū Shihāb describes in her works society as the carrier of disease. In its present stage one cannot distinguish its symptoms. The short story entitled *Zahīra ḥāmiya* (*Hot Afternoon*) shows a man and the long period of development of his disease before it starts to spread. The author broaches the question of class

conflicts presenting the rich heroes from times past and contrasting them with the contemporary rich.

It can generally be concluded that short stories from this period belong to the traditional romantic and realistic currents. They were filled with pain, suffering, desperation, sadness and disappointment. The subject matter concerned social matter i.e. the marriage of underage girls, the lack of respect for the opinions and aspirations of the young. Besides which in those stories we notice attempts to undertake new topics which are connected with the introduction of a new life style linked to the economic and financial changes caused by the discovery of crude oil.

Chapter I

The Beginnings and Flowering of the Short Story

The collection of short stories entitled *al-Khashaba* (*A Piece of Wood*), was written in the years 1974–1975 by ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī,²⁸³ who played an important role in the history of Emirate literature. For he was to become a pioneer of the short story with his debut in 1969 marked by the collection *Qulūb la tarḥam* (*Ruthless Hearts*).

The collection begins with the quotes of European writers, including the words of Renè Char:²⁸⁴ *He who comes into the world and leaves no trace behind him is not worthy of attention.*²⁸⁵ As a result of the censorship in place at the time the work was only published in 1999, which was twenty years after it had been penned.

It appears essential to aid an understanding of the contents of *al-Khashaba* (*A Piece of Wood*) to sketch a brief historical-cultural background for the period 1960–1980, an era characterised in the Arab world by the widespread relief experienced following the throwing off of the chains of imperialism and the striving towards Pan-Arabism. This was the period of the bloody Arab-Israeli wars (in 1967 and 1973), of the civil wars that plagued the Lebanon, as well as tribal conflicts in the Sudan. The small kingdoms of the Gulf that had been under the protection of London found themselves, following Westminster’s decision of military withdrawal by 1971, in negotiations to create future federations. Qatar and Bahrain, despite their initial plans to join together into a single state, were to remain independent, while the sheikdoms that had composed the Trucial States (excluding Ra’s al-Khayma) were to create in December 1971 the United Arab Emirates.²⁸⁶

All the social processes that occurred and occur within the countries of the Persian Gulf were and are connected with oil, the discovery of which occurred in Abū Zābi in 1960. Already within five years the income from crude had reached ten million dollars and in the years to come the sum was to double.²⁸⁷ This sudden and substantial increase in income was to bring with itself urban, technological progress, it was to result in the creation of a huge number of schools and institutions of higher education²⁸⁸ as well as

²⁸³ See: Biographies of Writers.

²⁸⁴ Renè Char (1907–1988), French poet, member of the French Resistance. Initially influenced by Surrealism then he moved onto aesthetic allegorism aspiring to conciseness and maximum simplicity of style expressing involvement in the struggle for universal values and an opposition to violence in the contemporary world, from: *Encyklopedia Literatry Światowej*, Kraków 2005, p. 605.

²⁸⁵ ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī, *al-Khashaba*, Bayrūt 1999, p. 5.

²⁸⁶ headword: United Arab Emirates, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, eb. com. 2009.

²⁸⁷ Zdzisław Marzec, *Opowieści Zatoki Perskiej*, Warszawa 1968, p. 51.

²⁸⁸ *At the moment of obtaining independence by the United Arab Emirates in 1971 there were around 60 schools, with the Al-‘Ayn University being founded in 1977.*, in: Barbara Michalak-Pikulska, *Zarys współczesnej nowelistyki krajów Półwyspu Arabskiego*, Kraków 2000, p. 10.

state financed media,²⁸⁹ all of which were to play an important role in the shaping of the spirit of the literature that was to come.

The culmination of the above outlined factors had to result in various forms of conflict and social unrest, while their impact on the former traditions and tribal practices was to find its reflection in the literary works created at the time. Contacts with Europe and its literary output resulted in the creation of a form of narration derived from discursive meetings, and literary clubs, for example “Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ Al-Imārāt”.²⁹⁰

The first short story entitled *Fī an-nāḥiyya al-ukhrā kânū yash ‘alūna an-nār* (*They Set it on Fire on the Other Side*) which opens the collection *al-Khashaba* (*A Piece of Wood*) is divided into three parts. The narrator, who in the first person relates the events, presents two planes of cognition: the first upon which he perceives the physically (*bi-‘aynay al-‘ādiyya* – *with one’s ordinary eyes*) ordered crowds of people welcoming the head of state and the second constituting in turn his cutting gaze (*bi-‘aynay at-tāqiba*), with which he hacks through the initially imperceptible face of events exposing the reality of the occasion – on the one hand crowds of protesting people, while on the other the army units advancing against them. He himself is shortly to find himself entwined in the course of events concluding in his imprisonment.

The second part depicts the hero’s imprisonment. The triviality and absurdity that constitute the reason for incarceration strike, these are the knitting of brows or the shaking of heads: *And no sooner had I frowned than I was taken away for questioning.*²⁹¹ The story’s end, in part three, brings with it an initial relief (as with all events when seen fleetingly), when everything that had happened before turns out to have been a dream. However, what unfolds before the narrator’s eyes is an all encompassing fire – the symbol of fire that burns in people’s hearts and with its destructive force engulfs all in its path.

The author utilises numerous symbols in the work, for example dream as the prediction of events that are to occur in reality. The crowd is the symbol of a paralysing force, authority and domination over adversaries who engage in opposition to it:

*They are approaching. I can feel their heavy tread on the ground. [...] They are beating me and kicking me.*²⁹²

While the metaphor: *fires ignited within us* (*isha ‘alat al-ḥarā’iq finā*) links itself to the revolt and anger that are the leading motifs in the short story.

The next story *as-Suqūt* (*The Fall*) is in a sense a thematic continuity of the previous work. The hero finds himself standing against soldiers who symbolise the instrument of power and are the personification of its tyranny. In revolting he injures one of them: *I ripped a piece of nose off one of the guards.*²⁹³ His fate is, however, already determined, as he himself knows. Defending himself from the painful blows of the rifles and soldiers’

²⁸⁹ In 1965 there was founded the journal *Akhbār Dubayy*, in 1969 – *Al-Ittiḥād*, while in 1971 – *Al-Khalīj*

²⁹⁰ Barbara Michalak-Pikulska, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

²⁹¹ ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī, *Fī an-nāḥiyya al-ukhrā kânū yash ‘alūna an-nār*, in: *al-Khashaba*, Bayrūt 1999, p. 14.

²⁹² ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

²⁹³ ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī, *as-Suqūt*, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

boots, he falls in front of the people watching him with pity and powerlessness. The one person in the crowd who has the courage to approach is a boy playing on the street: *I touched delicately his black curly hair*.²⁹⁴ He epitomises innocence and a world unblemished by evil.

In a way similar to the previous tale this short story is divided into three parts, which mark the sudden turns in the action. There dominates the naturalism of the torture scenes and images of death, which is to show the cruelty man is capable of: *He'll cut you open so you can see your own insides*.²⁹⁵ The dying of the protagonists is symbolic in significance, filled with suffering and loneliness.

In the short story *Nashwa wasaṭ idḡirāb li- 'ālam yamūt* (*Madness Amidst the Chaos of a Dying World*) we deal with a somewhat different subject matter, although equally one saturated with pessimism. Depicted is a scene in which the hero – a poor man carrying nothing more than a bag with books, tries to find a place on a crowded train. Clearly the author perceived the man as an intellectual, while the crowded train may constitute a symbol for society. Despite repeated attempts it is impossible for him to get into the carriage. Everyone is pushing mercilessly. The incessant attempts to get into the carriage result in his collapse from exhaustion. Even when he attempts to support himself with his arm on the threshold of the door, the boots of the passengers crush his hands, injuring them. Some, seeing his plight, attempt to help, others just look on. When the train leaves the hero tries, with the last of his strength, to chase after it. The books that he has been holding under his arm fall onto the ground. When he finally manages to grab the door-step – on pulling himself into the carriage – he falls from the rushing train, which crushes his head. The author presents the varied reactions of the passengers to the incident: some swear that the victim himself was guilty, others avert their gaze, others leave enveloped in sorrow and tears.

The depicted story relates to the collapse of social relations as well as society's indifference to human suffering. The writer presents the opposition of society and the individual. In this confrontation the majority wins, while the manifestations of individualism are condemned to defeat. The members of a society growing rapidly wealthy start to look after their own interests, forgetting about their fellow man. They pretend that they cannot see events being played out beyond their own insular lives. A certain current of optimism is brought by those who wished to help. However, when the hero dies they are left with only tears – the symbol of apathy. Of note is also the work's title, which suggests a world heading towards destruction.

The short story *al-Ḥafla* (*The Reception*) tells of women who are deprived of all rights and are unable to decide about their own fate. The slave that is the symbol of woman in the Arab world becomes an object of trade at a market. The description of her behaviour is the effect of her being deprived of all rights and her complete subjugation to men: *She stared repeatedly at the ground... in silence*.²⁹⁶ She is a plaything in the hands of men, who may observe her stripped of her clothes and laugh at her: *She hid her charms and*

²⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

²⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁹⁶ 'Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirri, *al-Ḥafla*, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

*the places he leered at under her shabby black clothes.*²⁹⁷ In their eyes the only value a woman possesses is her physicality hidden beneath a black abaya. The hypocrisy of her torturers is expressed in their *long beards* – a symbol of religiosity and connection to tradition, something that does not stop them from breaking the rules of the Koran and established social norms. The end of the story has an unusually pessimistic undertone: the slave, who fell victim to rape on the part of one of the men, has to die along with him at the hands of the event's observers: *Their wounds started to gush blood after their killers had left correcting the lie of their iqale*²⁹⁸ (the black cord holding the headscarf on the heads of men). The realism of the scenes demonstrating the tragism of the female figure strike with its photographic quality – her defencelessness and innocence in the face of the sentence of a merciless society. The use in the short story of the present tense has the aim of showing the continuity in time of the moment discussed, of an event that is to this day still a current occurrence.

The short story *al-Khashaba (A Piece of Wood)* presents a scene where the main hero together with his comrades stands chained to the title *piece of wood*. Something similar to former stocks secure their feet, making movement and escape from the scorching sun impossible: *Sweat constantly poured off him. He huddled up in despair.*²⁹⁹ This situation, one without exit, makes the hero reflect on the causes that led to his sorrowful state. He recalls the days when he cared not for his external appearance. He dressed in old, worn clothes and did not cut his hair. When one day he decided to shave and dress neatly he was instantly noticed and criticised by others. It was thought that he had taken leave of his senses. *Qays has gone mad.*³⁰⁰ In the end the whole matter is investigated by the police, who arrest him. The question as to the reason for 'serving time' asked by the hero starts a dialogue amongst the remaining prisoners; a dialogue that involves four other comrades in misery. It turns out that each of them was sentenced at a moment of change in his life, when he decided, in some way or other, to escape from the routine of everyday life. They were then referred to as *madmen*.

In the short story *Hulm al-yaqza wa-l-ightirāb (Dream of Awakening and Alienation)* again recourse is made to the problem of hypocrisy and deceit. The narrator, in moving from his ideal dream to observations of reality, warns the world of traps and moral collapse. At the same time he refers to beards – the symbol of religiosity – rebuking his false "friends": *Some of my friends use my name with pleasure telling idiotic and disgusting jokes.*³⁰¹ He ponders what it is that inclines them to behave thus. He accuses them of sneering at him only because he has not grown a long beard.

'Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī criticises the faults and flaws of certain "devout" members of Arab society: their vain lives, laziness, backward views and habits, artificial piety. The entirety is reflection on the human condition, with everything expressed in a concise way, through a limited pool of words and in simple language.

The last work of the collection entitled *Laḥẓat at-taḥwūt az-zamanī ḥīnamā takūn al-ashyā' al-mu'tāda usṭūra (The Changing Moment When Ordinary Things Become*

²⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁹⁸ 'Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī, *al-Ḥaṣṣa*, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

²⁹⁹ 'Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī, *al-Khashaba*, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

³⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

³⁰¹ 'Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī, *Hulm al-yaqza wa-l-ightirāb*, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

a *Legend*) again examines human suffering with the help of dialogue as it passes between the witnesses of the event. In front of their eyes is played out the tragic death of a mother and two kids in a burning house. The reason for the blaze is unknown. Yet one may guess that it was caused by someone who wanted to punish her for immoral behaviour. The man – the father of the children – falls into a fury on seeing the burnt bodies, while his mind is haunted by various images: *later the body broke into two pieces, and he was dirtied with blood.*³⁰²

‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad’s aim is not so much to condemn the existing state of things as to seek a new order. As Robin Ostle writes: *In this sense contemporary Arab novelists may be considered creative critics of their society, and not partisans fighting against an established order.*³⁰³

The collection of short stories *Al-Khashaba* (*A Piece of Wood*) was conceived in the uncertainty and disappointment of the first years of independence. ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī focused on the basic problem then faced by the Emirates: the fight for freedom, social questions, injustice, particularly in relation to women and children. He believed that the country could instigate reforms ensuring prosperity and justice.

Misfortune, despair, abject poverty are words of an enhanced negativity, several of the semantically possible equivalents of the Arabic word *ash-shaqā’*.³⁰⁴ It is impossible to decide which best conveys the content of ‘Ali ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ash-Sharhān’s collection of short stories.³⁰⁵ De facto, all of the stories are saturated with physical and psychic suffering. The heroes often fall into despair and are often dogged by abject poverty, understood both as a lack of things to live off as well as a collapse in moral values – spiritual poverty.

The sixteen short works cover a wide spectrum of subjects, chiefly connected with the social, economic and cultural changes taking place in the United Arab Emirates since the beginning of the 1960s when the discovery and export of oil fuelled economic development. The heroes are the Bedouin of the desert, sailors, pearl hunters, farmers, though also urban dwellers beset by a range of problems starting from dishonest employers, most often landowners, cruel capitalists, through natural disasters – crop failures, fires, attacks by wild animals, and finishing with generational problems. All of which are described in a simple language, without unnecessary elaboration and literary devices, perfectly conveying the severity of the conditions in which the people of the “Pirate Coast” live, suffer and die.

The collection opens with the work *Widā ‘an yā aḥibbā’i* (*Farewell, My Darling*). The hero and narrator is a nameless sailor, the head of a family, the father of a small group

³⁰² ‘Abd Allāh Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī, *Laḥẓat at-tafāwut az-zamanī ḥinamā takūn al-ashyā’ al-mu’tāda usṭūra*, op.cit., p. 85.

³⁰³ Robin Ostle, *Studies in Modern Arabic Literature*, London 1975, p. 126.

³⁰⁴ ash-shaqā’ – from the Wehr Dictionary – misfortune, distress, misery, wretchedness, pain, suffering; hardship, trouble, toil, drudgery, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (ed. M. Cowan), Urbana IL 1993, ed. IV.

³⁰⁵ See: Biographies of Writers.

of children, a member of crew of the intercontinental *al-Batīl*, from Africa to India. The story begins with an artistic description of the setting sun and the calm sea. The sailors, tired from their daily chores, seek a rest home for their tired bones, muscles and joints. Suddenly the captain orders: *Get ready! A storm's approaching! Make safe the sails! Shore up the cargo!*³⁰⁶ Work commences, night falls and the uneven struggle with the storm begins, during the course of which a part of the goods transported on the deck are damaged. No one is hurt. However, responsibility for the loss, regardless of innocence in the matter, lands squarely on the shoulders of our hero, responsible for making the load safe. Despite this blow he does not lose heart, driven as he is by the thought of the approaching meeting with his close ones. Upon docking at port he will at last sit down with his family to the celebratory supper he has dreamt of while at sea. The spell, however, soon bursts. In the evening the captain comes to his house with the news that that very night they sail for India. Knowing what it would mean to refuse he agrees and, amidst tears, bears farewell to his loved ones and sets sail.

This short work is but an overture, a taster of what is to come. We witness the difficult lot of a sailor, fighting nature's forces, human ruthlessness and the pain of separation. Not for the first time in the literature of the Gulf is the sea taken up as a motif. The sea as witness to joy and sorrow, pain and suffering.

The job of a pearl diver is covered by the author in the short story *Afrāḥ mā ba 'da-l-mawt* (*The Posthumous Moments of Happiness*). The hero is attached to the sea, he suffers if he does not sail, he suffers also if he is not with his loving wife. He hates the life of the 'landlubbers', he also hates the captain of the boat upon which he is to sail. For which he has reason. During one of the pearl runs he was thrown into the water to a certain death all because the captain could not allow himself to be late. Miraculously he was saved and returned home. To this day the sea plays an important part in the social life of the Emirates. It provides food, employment, joy, freedom and hope. All matters of life and death are imbued with its presence.

In the short story, *Ḥufra dūna qā'* (*The Bottomless Chasm*) the bottomless chasm of the title is, according to the hero of the tale, a sixty-year-old impoverished fisherman – life. Life which we do not enter but fall into it like into a chasm. Life which is a constant flight downwards.

The story begins with a description of the conditions the hero lives in. This is a poor village, a modest hut:

*Silence descends over the village like that of the dead. The cries of children and the whispering of couples dies down, the whispering of dogs [...] the call of the muezzin for the early morning prayer.*³⁰⁷

However, our fisherman does not pray. Rather after a quick wash he sets off to hunt to satisfy his hunger and that of his wife. He thinks as he goes. He is dogged by doubts: is she with him because she loves him or simply for the food he brings her. However, it seems to him that they are linked by feelings. He sails out into deep water to catch the most fish. Unexpectedly a shark appears, biting off the man's leg. With the last of his

³⁰⁶ 'Alī 'Abd al-'Azīz ash-Sharhān, *Widā'an yā aḥibbā'i*, in: *ash-Shaqā'*, Dubayy 1992, ed. II, p. 10.

³⁰⁷ 'Alī 'Abd al-'Azīz ash-Sharhān, *Ḥufra dūna qā'*, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

strength he manages to make the shore, where he is surrounded by an interested crowd of local bystanders. He is carried home, where, suffering in silence, he hears a conversation. It turns out that what worries those around him is not his health but who will inherit what. Dejected he falls into a deadly sleep. In taking farewell of the world he says: *Farewell life... A bottomless chasm, bottomless...*³⁰⁸

The reader is left with many questions: why is the chasm bottomless? Is this not, maybe, a metaphor for life after death? Is there further to fall after this life?

The title story *ash-Shaqā' (Despair)* is in quintessence the whole book in theme. It tells of a certain poor family, an old marriage with a grown up son: she is a paralysed woman, who does not leave home, her husband works extremely hard on the land. Their son, also a farmer, the central protagonist in the work and at the same time the narrator, leads the reader into this hostile world, sharing with him his reflections and inner experiences. The whole family lives in a modest hut covered in palm branches in a village in an oasis. The story takes place in July, when temperatures can reach 50°C, difficult conditions to live in. The father as usual returns home late from work. The son tries to talk to him, he wants to help. However he, embittered, wants no one's help. He does not want to share his suffering with anyone: *What are you interested in my affairs for?! Don't you interfere! Go away! Leave me alone!*³⁰⁹

The son does not give up though. He knows the father has done much for him and his mother. He knows that something is tormenting him. The next day the father reveals to him that he has massive debts to the landowner and if the crops are not good he will lose everything. The situation becomes dramatic. There is no help forthcoming. The son works too hard as it is, all that remains is despair. The following day the father leaves for the fields... and does not return. Instead a messenger comes with news of the old man's death. The son's eyes fill with tears and rage grips the son as the messenger's words talk of debt and its transfer onto him. There fall the words: *they think only of money even at the hour of death.*³¹⁰

A world without principles. A world that has forgotten what is humanity. Not much time passes and his mother dies. He cries but after a little time wipes his eyes and falls into reflection over the meaning of life, a life in which a sad end awaits everyone... A story full of sorrow. The couple bravely face the misfortune that befalls them. Even though they do not give up, the work ends tragically. In the Emirates the work was pioneering as it broached the subject of exploitation. Moral problems are closely connected with the social. 'Alī 'Abd al-'Azīz ash-Sharhān reflects on the modern world. He asks what is freedom, work, money. Is it not true that one's identity can be lost in modern society?

Women in many families are to this day treated as objects, unable to decide their own fate. After an initial revolt she agrees to be subordinated to a man. The short story *al-Alam wa-l-ḥaqīqa (Pain and Reality)* depicts the tragism of violating one's partner's freedom. This time the narrator is a young girl: Fātima, a representative of the generation growing up on the border of the traditional and the modern. She wants to live in her own way. Besides fulfilling her daily obligations, she learns at school and at home, although

³⁰⁸ 'Alī 'Abd al-'Azīz ash-Sharhān, *Ḥuḍra dūna qā'*, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

³⁰⁹ 'Alī 'Abd al-'Azīz ash-Sharhān, *ash-Shaqā'*, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

³¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

conditions are not conducive to this. Non-conducive is a collapsing marriage, one without feelings, with the only reason for being together is the desire for money. Against this backcloth is played out the conflict between mother and daughter but also between the beliefs of individuals and those of society. The daughter loves an impoverished fisherman. The girl knows that if she does not act as her parents want she will be deserted. Therefore she knows that even if she wants to follow her heart she must conform to society. Not for the first time in the literature of the Gulf is a mother shown in a negative light. She is still the pillar of the opportunism that reigns.

The short story *Rihla fī 'ālam ākhar* (*Journey to Another World*) appears one of the most mysterious of the collection. A tale at odds with the themes of the volume. This is the description of a fisherman's dream. The narrator-hero thinks he has reached another planet. Carried by the wind he flies above the hills until he reaches a land full of creatures with their own traditions, beliefs, living in their own way. He ends up on a boat decorated in flowers. Beings holding white flags approach him. They say something. He is unable to understand them. He feels he is in another world, without suffering, despair, chaos and tragedy. He notices that the beings, looking like children, have, except for height, all the hallmarks of adulthood. They suddenly approach him, start to undress him and kiss him. Then they cover him with a vestment and he changes into one of them and starts to understand the unknown language. He feels immense happiness which does not last. When he returns to reality it was only a dream. He yearns for the imagined unreal world. The author longs for a utopia of happiness and justice. From Plato onwards writers have dreamed of such an ideal world.

The stories from *ash-Shaqā'* (*Despair*) have features of total involvement in the painful matters of Emirate society. The writer shows ordinary people's affairs and dealings, ones universal for the Gulf. He follows the individual confronting his behaviour with that of the collective. Most stories show a despair at the reality in force.

'**Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī**³¹¹ is one of the story pioneers in the Emirates as well as one of the founders of the Emirates Literature Association. The collection of works entitled *ar-Rafḍ* (*The Refusal*) opens with a very erudite and symbolic dedication:

*For my country. The land on which we played as children, where we dreamt and where we imagined palaces [...] These happy dreams will go on forever [...] My country, I give you my blood and my soul for your glory*³¹²

The sea and the lives of people dependent on it belong to the most commonly discussed topics. The author himself, due to his place of residence, was very strongly connected with the sea. This finds its reflection in the detailed and beautiful descriptions of the sea, which are present in almost every work. They most often occur as the reflection of the main character's soul, the external presentation of his internal state, or as the background of the described events.

³¹¹ See: Biographies of Writers.

³¹² 'Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī, *Dedication*, in: *ar-Rafḍ*, ash-Shāriqa 1992, p. 5.

The discussed topic regards the widely understood social issues. We also find various aspects of the everyday life of ordinary people: realistic descriptions of human suffering, the social injustice, the relationships that occur in the family and in society, the position of woman in the traditional Arab world or the image of an ever changing society, specifically though its opening on to Western influences and great economic changes after the discovery of petroleum.

The first piece described by me is the title work *ar-Rafḍ* (*The Refusal*). It begins with the description of a girl, whose age and appearance is not known until the very end. Ghanima, the main character, is trudging home crying. She locks herself in her room. She analyzes her life, which was never accompanied by any luck. The feeling of alienation and loneliness has always accompanied her as *she has walked through life on a bumpy path, tripping on scattered rocks, which lay on her path to happiness*.³¹³ The girl, mainly due to her appearance, was the object of jealousy, hatred and contempt, and it was these very feelings that drove one of her friends to yell *that word* to her. That one word ruined her life. Ghanima remembered her mother, who was in fact the only one who raised her, and was not her biological mother. She imagined the moment in which she had been left at the doorstep of one of the houses of the area. *In as deep sleep, wrapped in a shawl, and a meagre amount of money next to her*...³¹⁴ Even though the girl was taken in by a merciful lady of the house, the word “foundling” caused a sharp pain in her heart. After the period of rebellion, she stopped lamenting and obsessively began thinking about marriage, about the wonderful man she will give joy to, and by whose side she will be happy. The author presents the moment in which the girl takes the decision to get married: *I am not worried about anything, not about his three wives, not about the amount of his obligations, or his age*...³¹⁵

The key content of this story is marriage, which the main character agrees to. *The Refusal*, the title of the story, sounds ironic and perverse in this context. Ghanima hopes that her husband will bring a bit of happiness into her life. The future of the girl, branded with the name *foundling* causes her to feel lost and lonely.

The next story is entitled *Sadhāja* (*Naivety*). The main character in the beginning of the story is a woman who is awaiting the return of her son with great anxiety. The reader learns that his absence has lasted for a significant period of time. The woman, full of fear *placed her hand on her forehead, thinking in silence, which required her absolute solitude. Her heart was covered with sadness that accompanied its beating. She sighed deeply*...³¹⁶ She had not received any news from him for a long time, hence in sitting in her room, waiting for the phone to ring, she reminds herself of fragments of their discussion, before his departure. The reader learns that Nāji was to leave for a week to Bahrain, along with his friend Nadīr. This is their subsequent, fourth journey to this country. The distressed woman tries to face her anxiety. At the same time she is thinking about the reason for such frequent trips. The main character falls into obsession, by nervously and incessantly thinking about why her son is not calling and is not giving any sign of life.

³¹³ ‘Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī, *ar-Rafḍ*, in: *ar-Rafḍ*, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

³¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

³¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

³¹⁶ ‘Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī, *Sadhāja*, in: *ar-Rafḍ*, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

Thoughts of a potential girlfriend in Bahrain are interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. The voice coming through the receiver is however not the voice expected by the woman. A police officer is calling, asking for the woman to go to the airport as quickly as possible. The mother's heart freezes in fear. She immediately calls her husband. From this moment the father becomes the main character of the story. He rushes to the airport by car. He is wondering about what happened to his son. The police officer is waiting for him there, who informs him on the return of his son and his friend from Bangkok. The father seems surprised by this piece of news and claims that his son was to be in Bahrain. The police officer's response falls like a ton of bricks on the father when he informs him that they received information from the airport is Bangkok on sending a coffin with the remains of his son and his friend. After a moment of silence, the guard rather awkwardly tries to offer his sincerest words of sympathy: *The dose was very high... Let God curse this poison.*³¹⁷ The story ends with the description of the father's feelings and experience.

*He heard the whirr of the landing and departing airplanes, his head was close to exploding, as if it was removed from the rest of his body. His eyes became lifeless, his body petrified, he repeated several incomprehensible letters, mumbling them like a riddle [...] Narcotics...*³¹⁸

The author constructed this short, six page story in a very interesting manner. From the very beginning uncertainly, expectation as well as fear of the bad feelings that arise are present. This tension is made stronger by the slow development of the plot. The very meticulous description of the short period of time, in which the story takes place, also adds to the atmosphere of anxiety. The accumulation of details, the minute presentation of each movement of the mother, every one of her words, those – that allegedly – are not at all connected with the main plot increasing the expectation of the upcoming events. The slow discovery of information accumulates so as to – through the direct words of the police officer *the coffins of his son and his friend* – thwart all the reader's hopes. The story tries to present the problem of young people connected with drug abuse.

The next story *Sukūn* (*Silence*) begins with a longer description of nature.

*The sea was sinking in its sorrow, lost in its solitary silence, which was previously unknown to it, the waters were falling mixed with cloudiness, dark colours of sadness were dispersed here and there, while the frothy waves were breaking, disappearing in this darkness...*³¹⁹

A fish market, which had been overcome with grave silence for the past several days, was located in close proximity of the sea. 'Atīq sat down on a wooden chest. In this way, he spent another day with his market neighbour Ḥamdān. They were reminiscing as to how this place looked in the past: crowded, loud, a variety of fish, large stalls. The following statement was made several times during their discussion: *and then what was going to happen happened...* The reader assumes that some catastrophe had happened at sea, however they cannot guess what it was. The cemetery, mentioned in the first

³¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

³¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

³¹⁹ 'Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī, *Sukūn*, in: *ar-Rafīd*, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

sentences, at which the silence was just as unsettling as the one at sea raises certain associations, which still remain in the sphere of guesses.

‘Atīq along with Ḥamdān are preparing and flaying the fish, complaining about their present situation. The main character is drowned in debt. The situation of the town’s residents was no better. ‘Atīq remembers how thirty years ago he had nothing apart from his fishing net. He describes the manner of fishing with the help of an old fishing net; he sold the fish on the same day. These happy times ended in the 1960s. ‘Atīq then bought a boat, which constantly required renovations. Asians hired to help were not able to work in such high temperatures. People started becoming wealthier and preferred buying their fish in the supermarket. His boat was one of the last that went out to sea. And then the misfortune happened. A steamship with barrels containing a deadly poison that threatened the life of the fish and the residents sank.

‘Atīq remembered the time during which the sea was his pride and joy. As a young boy, he would go fishing with his father. A song that he used to sing with his father resounded in his mind... A group of controllers came to the fish market. It was headed by an inspector who was ordering the sellers to close their stalls immediately. All the sellers handed over their fish to the employees walking around the market, who then threw them into cars waiting nearby. Someone tried to calm the crowd of disoriented sellers that laboratory tests would be conducted on the fish, to ensure that they do not contain any substances harmful to man. ‘Atīq returned home, while the seagulls were lamenting above the sea.

The topic of the sea and those dependent on it has been present in Emirate literature for some time. For centuries it was the generous provider of employment and food for the residents of the Gulf. Two planes can be differentiated in the story: ‘Atīq’s contemporary life and his memories. In his frequent memories of the past there is a visible longing for the times that have passed. Sadness towards the former lifestyle, which changed as a result of the social changes, is visible in his retrospections. The author makes a reference to the real history to the Gulf, when the discovery of petroleum changed the society, which up to then had lived off fishing and pearl trading. The citizens knew that they had to adapt to the social changes, nevertheless they tried to emphasize their belonging to the times before the discovery of petroleum. The short titbits, which casually include detailed information, i.e. on the roofs made from palm leaves, a description of the Arabic fish market and the haggling practices that take place there are also very valuable.

The title of the story *Sa’īda* (the name of the main character) seems to be ironic. ‘Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī undertakes a topic that has been exploited many times, namely making a woman dependent on her husband. The story begins with a description of the piercing peace, over the entire district, which the author calls district “S”.

*The land was overcome by night, it blackened the light shining here and there, it was slowly falling asleep, above the doors of the snobbish houses, adorned in magnificent contemporary attire.*³²⁰

Suddenly someone is knocking at the door of Abu Ibrahim, disturbing the peace and causing the yapping of the awoken dogs. *They were overcome with fear, in which the*

³²⁰ ‘Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī, *Sa’īda*, in: *ar-Rafḍ*, op.cit., p. 9.

*mind no longer mattered, it was just coming up to two o'clock in the morning.*³²¹ Abū Ibrāhīm armed with a metal rod went to open the door. He heard sobbing, and after some time, recognized the voice of his frightened neighbour. At this moment, both the reader as well as the residents of the neighbouring building begin to understand the dramatic events that forced Sa'ida to leave her home in the middle of the night. The woman began remembering her own past, the words of her father:

*My daughter, listen to my advice, Šāliḥ is the most suitable husband for you, he has everything you will need: The aristocratic background, bank accounts, a great deal of money and good social status. He always prayed in the mosque either in front of me or next to me. What more could you want?*³²² as well as my friends' advice. *Don't abandon the life which lies ahead of you. An opportunity like this will not come again, think about it.*³²³

She remembers the information that Abū Ibrāhīm is also getting married, and this finally convinces her to agree to marry Šāliḥ.

Confused Sa'ida began telling Umm Ibrāhīm about what happened at night:

*He was dragging me by my feet, and my head hit everything that was along the way, starting with the bedroom [...] With all bestiality... As if I were a sheep... And then he threw me out of the house in just my nightgown.*³²⁴

Umm Ibrāhīm tried to calm her, it was however difficult for her to stop the flow of words, that Sa'ida starting uttering, describing all of her misfortunes. She described how from the beginning of their marriage Šāliḥ carried a small bottle of wine with him, from which he often drank alcohol; about the pain which he incessantly caused her, with which she had to face by herself for all of these years. She once again returned to the events of that night, crying for her children that she was forced to leave behind, and whose present fate remains unknown. Tears, which she could not control, were falling along her face. With a petrified heart Umm Ibrāhīm reminded herself of the story of Sa'ida's husband that was the talk of the entire district. When the neighbour left the room to prepare a place to sleep for Sa'ida, the silence of the night is once again interrupted by a strong and aggressive banging at the door. Šāliḥ came to collect his property.

The story accents the hypocrisy of traditional Arab society in its matter of selection of a life partner. The text also shows the lack of responsibility and the cruelty of men, who take full control over their women. And it finally makes the reader aware of the subsequent problem of Arab society – alcohol, which although is officially banned, unofficially becomes the reason for many an unhappy life.

The story links with social topics, also touching upon themes not discussed in the collection of short stories entitled *Sa'ida*: the problem of parents leaving their children in care facilities (in the story entitled *al-Ḥuṭām*) or marrying a foreigner (a story included under the English title *Dream*). It is worth noting that the individual feelings of the main

³²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

³²² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

³²³ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

³²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

characters, ones belonging to a different culture, are unusually similar to the feelings experienced by all persons. The same solitude and the need for closeness, the same anxiety of a mother about her son and the same despair of a father after the loss of a child, the same sadness for the better times which have passed and a fear of the loss of means of earning a living, a mother's fear for her child, or the same deadly fear of an aggressive husband...

The beginnings of short story writing are connected with the writer **Shaikha Mubārak an-Nākhī**³²⁵ the author of short stories that were published in 1970 in the collection entitled *Ar-Raḥīl* (*The Departing*). The heroine of the tale has marriage imposed on her, marriage to an already too old rich man. Nobody cares about her feelings for the boy from the neighbourhood. She finds no understanding either in her family or society at large. The story which is a study of unrequited love ends in the heroine's death. She could not accept her fate. The writer describes the clash with social reality and traditional values. an-Nākhī also brings into the discussion the way in which marriages are concluded and the authority of the father, who often places material gain over the good of his daughters. Attention is paid to mixed marriages and the problem of polygamy. Through a constant improvement in technique, Emirate female writers like Shaikha an-Nākhī have entered into the social debate on the present and future of the Emirates. This voice manifest within the format of the short story has sought for itself, from the very beginning, original and individual means of expression.³²⁶

The later collection *Riyāḥ ash-shimāl* (*The Winds of the North*) is worthy of note.³²⁷ Human suffering, interpersonal bonds and war constitute the axes around which the tales hang. The collection is stylistically, compositionally and thematically uniform. Often there appears the motif of a child within the context of its innocence and failure to understand events like war. Childhood is most often associated with play and carefreeness. The author is not indifferent to the situation of the children, who do not understand the presence of wounded people in their homes, being displaced and the noise of shells. It seems that as a woman she is more sensitive to this aspect of war reality.

In *Ramād* (*Ash*) the children observe their wounded father, who wants to protect them from the truth as to his fate and who at the same time reads in their eyes the desire to learn this fate. The whole family has to be temporarily resettled. The children again find themselves in a situation they do not totally understand. The story ends with the words of a girl who runs to her room to collect her favourite doll. By ending the work in this way the author makes it clear that childhood innocence is something deserving of protection and sympathy. The author does not moralise or instruct, merely influencing the reader through the scenes he presents from everyday life.

³²⁵ See: Biographies of Writers.

³²⁶ Cf. Maryam Jum'a Faraj, *The Short Story in UAE*, in: *Cultural Life in Emirates*, United Arab Emirates 2008, pp. 67–80.

³²⁷ Shaikha an-Nākhī, *Riyāḥ ash-shimāl*, ash-Shāriqa 1999.

In many of the short stories the hero is presented deep in reflection as a result of recollections. These memories are usually of happier times than those experience now. Because the author describes the reality of war and life in a state of constant threat, her heroes return in their thoughts most often to the simplest things, everyday activities bringing with them happiness, to “paradise lost”. They remember the collecting of shells and pebbles on the seashore.

Consequently retrospection is often employed. These retrospective descriptions rivet one’s attention because of the quality of the writing. Shaikha an-Nākhī is able to smoothly move from a description of brutal reality to recollections full of joy and warmth.

The heroes wait for their beloved in an atmosphere full of uncertainty and fear. Interpersonal bonding and the family are fundamental values within Arabic culture, hence it is no surprise that they are depicted with such clarity. Women wait impatiently for the return of their men, they draw from their children with sensitivity and dedication. In *Al-A’mār (Life)* the author most sensitively deals with the question of interpersonal ties. The main hero finds himself in a critical state in hospital. He is visited by two stalwart friends. Without pathos, and yet in speaking to the feelings and imagination of the reader, the care for a friend and the vigil kept during the most difficult of moments is shown.

Dialogues are especially important in the stories. The heroes talk to each other in short bursts, something that strikes one given the love amongst Arab writers and ordinary Arabs themselves for elaborate utterances, and even elocution. Despite their brevity the quality of conveyance is not damaged in the least; the shortness and terseness increase the tension.

To sum up, one may say that Shaikha an-Nākhī consistently concludes the chosen subject without the inclusion of numerous digressions or not directly linked elements. This results in a stylistic and thematic whole. The compositional arrangement as well as the selection of linguistic and stylistic means is characterised by simplicity making the work easier for the reader to comprehend. It is difficult to establish whether the author had any specific military conflict in mind. It seems as if we are dealing with a universal concept of war and aggression, which reside permanently within the territories of the Middle East.

‘**Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad**³²⁸ is one of the best known and valued Emirate writers. Through his work he appears as an individual of specific sensitivity and with a heightened sense of observation. He perceives the close dependency between man and the development of civilization. This has found reflection in an exceptionally abundant literary and journalistic output. He talks of social, economic and cultural matters. On the basis of journalistic experience Aḥmad created his first literary attempts; the inspiration for which was always Emirate everyday life.

‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad is a respected journalist and Emirate writer. An important chapter in his literary work are his numerous collections of short stories. These he started to write in the 1970s. The collection *al-Baydār* was published for the first time in 1987.

³²⁸ See: Biographies of Writers.

It contains short stories maintained in the third person, ones reflective in character; in which realistic elements are often accompanied by dream like visions. The language is rich in similes and metaphors. The descriptions are unusually artistic, often with naturalistic traits. The author touches on a social subject matter grounded in the reality of the United Arab Emirates. The heroes are joined by a plethora of common interests; first and foremost they are seekers, often alone, misunderstood, grappling with varied problems.

The title bears the same name as the entire collection, and is composed of seven parts. These are varied in form. Narrative fragments are intertwined with those pointing to dramatic traits. The narrative parts are retrospective forages into events from the main hero's life. Consequently his character is shown by turns. Murīsh is involved in the artificial pollination of palms. Probably the title refers to someone employed in this profession. His other occupation is the ritual killing of animals. He lives in a tent erected on a sandy knoll. One day after work he falls into a sleep that turns out to be unusually realistic and which in point of fact becomes the next scene for his fate. Murīsh, in the company of his brother, leaves Bāṭina, his home district in Oman, and sets off for Dubai. His educated brother soon gains respect within the new environment and takes up a satisfying job of work. The dream taking him back to former times drives him to tears. In the next scene Murīsh is shown as an unhappy and lonely man. In conversation with a friend he admits that he is unhappy. His brother had died two years earlier, and he lives alone in a foreign land, of interest to no one. Life in a forgotten state is impossible for him to take. He asks: *How am I to live here?*³²⁹ Besides, nobody any longer is interested in either palms or sheep. He is unable to find a job though, for, as he says: *to work one needs an identity, a nationality, a passport. Nobody will take me on.*³³⁰ Although it is thirty years since he arrived in the Emirates he still yearns for his homeland and feels alienated. He decides therefore to return. In a further part of the story a certain woman talks about Murīsh. She recalls how she first saw him when she was eight years old. He had come to pollinate palms in her parents' garden. Then she had asked her father whether Murīsh had children, to which she received the reply:

*He lives alone in a tent. He has neither a wife nor children. Why has he not married? Because he is from Oman, he is poor. Who would want to marry him?*³³¹

She remembered him exactly, as a man who hobbled, with narrow eyes and dark stubble. He was wearing a blue-green coat as well as a shirt stained with sweat and earth. He was, however, an intriguing person and possibly even mysterious, which meant that the girl fell in love with him. From then onwards she saw him in every man, in every place, she heard his laugh in every sound of nature. The years passed. The girl left for university, and when she returned nobody mentioned Murīsh any longer.

Meanwhile the action in the short story unfolds on the sandy knoll where Murīsh's tent is pitched. The local people have gathered, driven by the vile stench emanating from the tent. The high temperatures and dry air intensify this unpleasant impression. The atmosphere is tense. The people fear the outbreak of an epidemic while at the same time

³²⁹ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad, *al-Baydār*, in: *al-Baydār*, Bayrūt 1987, p. 118.

³³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

³³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

being driven by curiosity. The entrance to the tent is closed. According to the account on one woman, Murīsh returned to Oman several days earlier. So why would he have left his tent, and in addition with its mysterious decaying contents? While another man claims that he had seen him several days earlier sitting in the shade of a palm. He had looked worried. The assembled people advance various hypotheses until at last someone suggests they enter the tent.

Inside they discover Murīsh's decaying corpse in a shocking state. His disintegrating putrid body is described in a most naturalistic way. His eyes were sunk into his body:

*Abū Husayn says that he can see worms coming out of his nose and ears [...] others say that they found many wounds and observed a gashing cut in his neck as well as caked blood on the ground he lay on.*³³²

A knife lay next to his body – he had more than likely committed suicide. Towards the end of the story we learn that he had not been allowed to cross the Emirate-Omani border. He had no passport, and the emigration officers did not want to listen to his explanation. He was not given the chance to be with his nearest and dearest in his homeland. He returned, therefore, to his tent, devoid of home or a sense of continued existence, he was riddled with yearning. He lived forgotten, alienated, shrouded in mystery. Only after his death did people take an interest in his person. *Mummy, who is Murīsh?*³³³ this child's question, repeated several times, standing with the others on the knoll, was not to receive a satisfactory answer.

Murīsh battles with the problem of a lack of citizenship and belonging within the society that he has ended up living in. The situation he finds himself in surpasses his abilities to cope. Although he spends many years attempting to assimilate within the new conditions and demands of life, he is unable to achieve the desired effects. Possibly this overwhelming yearning made it impossible for him to become flexible enough to meet the requirements to comprehend his new land, an unknown people and to move with the times; for he lived in a country that was making enormous progressive steps. Tired by his helplessness he decided to control the termination of his own life.

The hero of the short story *Ashyā' Kūyā aṣ-ṣaghīra* (*Kui's minor matters*) is a man called Kui. One day fortune smiled on him. He was to receive a letter from his wife, who lived far away in Kerala, in south-west India. In search of work he immediately left his home town. His wife had given birth to a son. He already had three daughters but had always dreamed of a son. After fourteen years of waiting his patience had been rewarded. What joy fulfilled his heart. In the same letter, however, his wife asked for financial support and clothing for the child. His financial situation was dire, but to begin with even this was not to upset his most excellent state of mind. It was only the middle of the month and he already had no money. He borrowed, therefore, 100 dirham, which was quickly spent at the market. He bought his wife material and clothes for the baby boy. Claspings the package to his breast he returned to his *little room in which there was merely a metal chest for personal effects and a bed with a stained sponge mattress.*³³⁴ He shares the

³³² *Ibidem*, pp. 124–125.

³³³ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

³³⁴ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad, *Ashyā' Kūyā aṣ-ṣaghīra*, in: *al-Baydār*, Bayrūt 1987, p. 9.

joyous news with friends. That night, however, he has a frightful dream. He experiences the smell of fresh meat, and sees a stream of blood and a dead newborn child, who is supposed to be his newborn son. Stunned by this shocking vision he runs all the faster the next morning to the post office in order to send the package to his family and help them. Unfortunately he had not thought earlier about the cost of postage. It turns out that the package will cost 50 dirham and he had spent the entirety of the borrowed money the previous day. He has no money to send the modest gift or to support his wife and children, or to return home. When he realises the hopelessness of his situation he falls into a panic. He returns to the bazaar where he had earlier bought the material and clothes to ask for him to buy them back. The merchant refuses however. He asks other traders for the same, showing and praising his goods. But no one wanted to buy the things which had initially been a present for his wife.

Until he was alone at the market showing his wares to the air, shouting in anger, in sorrow and out of the pitilessness of the situation fate had placed him in. He collapsed in the depths of immense remorse, forgetting about his happiness, his child and its mother.³³⁵ Desperate and devoid of hope Kūyā continued to trawl the streets of the great city showing merchants his package.³³⁶

It results from the story that also ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad cannot resist an examination of the problems of the influx to the Gulf of huge numbers of foreigners with the goal of work. The hero comes to the Emirates to earn a fortune. However, he soon realises how impossible his dreams are to fulfil. He undergoes a psychic crisis and accepts the fate of someone who must work at the hardest of labours, work that will not guarantee a quick return to his beloved family.

The action for the story *al-Mar’a al-ukhrā* (*Another Woman*) commences on the day of engagement celebrations. The house of the bride-to-be is beautifully decorated, and the guests are having a good time. However the main heroine is unhappy. She feels alone, misunderstood, torn by emotions. She observes the party as a critical observer and not an active participant. The women’s conversations on the wedding, the amount for the dowry, the groom to be – Khalfān, who for certain was desired by many, or the talk of the young couple’s happy married life are for her like *a frog’s croak or a snake’s hiss*.³³⁷ She feels that the event should not take place. On the basis of the description we can deduce that this is not the man she dreamed of:

He snores when asleep, his rib cage rising then falling. His snoring is like a chain saw struggling with a hardy tree. Spittle dribbles out of the corner of his mouth in a trickle.³³⁸

It is unknown how the heroine reaches these conclusions. Whatever she feels for him is nothing. This situation oppresses him. Hence the storm that has erupted inside her. For a certain time she successfully *suppressed the volcano which at any moment was*

³³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

³³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

³³⁷ ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad, *al-Mar’a al-ukhrā*, in: *al-Baydār, op.cit.*, p. 78.

³³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

to explode.³³⁹ When, however, the cup of bitterness had overflowed she gave vent to her emotions shouting for everyone to go and to leave her in peace. The guests considered her to be crazy, as did her father whose good name had been stained. He claimed that the outburst had been caused by his daughter trip abroad to study. As punishment he locks her in her room. At university she had told her friend that one day she would write a book about a different women, the one who lives inside of all of us. Yet the time has come for new responsibilities. She had wanted everyone to read her true story hidden behind the screen of tradition. She decides to carve out her work with a knife and not the pen. Khalfān, doubled up with pain, bidding farewell to life, is the first to meet this *other woman*. Even though she is now looking at the stars through prison bars she feels free, united with the woman who had found shelter inside, and who had accompanied her in life from that moment of uncontrollable laughter.

‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad asks questions about the place and roles of women in contemporary Emirate society. The heroine of the story, in searching for her own identity, decides to adopt radical methods. Even though she lives in her own country amongst those near to her, she feels lonely and misunderstood. This requires her to adopt the principles that are in force within society, principles that are, as it turns out, contrary to those she yearns for. All indications on her part of protest are understood as manifestations of madness. Admittedly she attempts to come to terms with her externally imposed lot, but in vain. For a life that is internally at odds with internal harmony becomes impossible to cope with. The imposing of traditional marriages and wedding values seems to remain one of the biggest problems of the countries of the Gulf.

The short story *Ṣaf’atān* (*The Dispensing of Two Slaps*) is somewhat lighter in tone. A young man leaves his native village Khūrfakān situated on the east bank of the Gulf in the United Arab Emirates. He feels lost, is unable to collect his thoughts. He is travelling by taxi. He leaves behind dust, stones, the sea and people. He says farewell to the hills and the expansive, sandy desert with a glassy gaze. He knows no emotion: *The state he found himself in was like flying in a vacuum, like watching air, or like walking on a sheet of water.*³⁴⁰ He finally reaches Dubai, where he stays at a friend’s. They talk about various things. The city lures him with its charm and although initially he was unable to specify these urban elements that have had such an impression on him, he is convinced that the city has bewitched him because it is so different from his village. His sense of connection with his home locality is a positive one, yet the virtues of urban life have, for that moment, shut out this sentimental image. The movement, noise, unusual people, captivating faces, tall, glass buildings, warm nights spent with an unknown woman. *The city sketches itself for him as a beautiful place, spacious, accessible and free.*³⁴¹ Life in the countryside is ordinary, monotonous, imbued with routine. However, the main difference lies in the mentality of the people: those living in the city are liberated, while those in the countryside are parochial. He has come to the city with the aim of discovering its secrets. He takes in the buildings and streets but chiefly the women, as each, so he claims, is worthy of his gaze. Country women were covered over down to the very last

³³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

³⁴⁰ ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad, *Ṣaf’atān*, in: *al-Baydār*, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

³⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

inch, and talk with them was extremely difficult. The women of the city wear jewellery and dresses, they have fashionable haircuts and come from various countries – the city becomes an interesting international mosaic.

The said observations make him think or arouse his curiosity: if he made a suggestion to a woman, what could be her reaction? The first woman to attract his gaze was to satisfy his curiosity. Her face was beautiful, and her body harmonious in shape. He walked behind her for a time, trying to reduce the distance between them. When he found himself close enough he asked her directly if she would like to have sex with him. Initially the woman froze and probably out of surprise could utter not a word. The question is repeated. This time the reaction was completely the opposite. She starts to scream but the man explains to her calmly that she is free to choose. This argument has no effect, however. She calls him a madman and uncultured. After a moment a crowd gathers, with police at the fore, who take the man away for questioning. It is only then that we learn that the said daredevil is Sa'īd 'Abd Allāh, a twenty-year-old student. Surprised at the commotion caused by question asked, one violating the woman's privacy, he answers that he has done nothing wrong. He had made her an offer, and she had the right to accept it or not. She had refused and then made much ado about nothing, and this had nothing to do with him. Because of his young age, the policeman decides that if the woman forgives him he may go. The agitated woman has no intention of letting him off the hook. He is dealt a slap in the face by the justice he receives, being sent to goal. This stains Sa'īd's image of a fascinating urban lifestyle. His attempt to conquer the city has ended quickly. It turns out that the city is like the woman he asked: *beautiful, but like her stupid; one may get from its insides at most a daring scream*.³⁴² The positive effect of the incident is that consequently Sa'īd has at least learnt that the city is not the ideal reflection of his imagination of it, and as such cannot constitute the aim of his life wanderings and quests. This our hero may be sure of. Sa'īd's mantra-like repeating claim terminates each of his thoughts: *I don't know*,³⁴³ is not the crowning of his exposition. Did he really not have any doubts in this matter?

In the short stories from the collection *al-Baydār* 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad examines many issues connected with social nature. In presenting the outlines of heroes in search of their own place in life, both in the literal as metaphorical sense, he asks questions of an existential nature. We may search for answers in the colourfully depicted lives and fates of particular characters. Whether the choices they make are the correct ones are left for the deeper reflection of the readers.

'Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad's writing is realistic in character, examining the current problems of citizens and society. In the short stories from the next collections: *'Alā ḥāfat an-nahār* (*On the Edge of the Day*) or *as-Sibāḥa fī 'aynay khālīj yatawaḥash* (*Swimming in the Eyes of the Savage Gulf*) one may observe the interdependence and embroilment of the protagonists, who succumb to the fate and customs of their epoch. The characters in representing various milieu are presented as cogwheels in the social machine, displayed in a development subjected to the constant changes forced by the actual conditions of life and work.

³⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 40.

³⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

Muḥammad al-Murr's³⁴⁴ work is extensive and complex. His stories were published in the collected works *al-'A'māl al-qaṣaṣiyya*.³⁴⁵ Their originality lies in his penetrating observations of the world. Murr's stories are free of any idealisation, rhetoric or moralising. They do not lose for this their sharp perception of difficult social matters. The writer also avoids easy simplifications and one-sided evaluations. His language is simple.

Modern Dubai with its technology and deep-rooted changes is the setting for *al-Ab wa al-ibn (Father and Son)*.³⁴⁶ Thanks to third person narration we know the thoughts and feelings of the heroes as well as the chronology. The times before crude oil were times of peace. The inhabitants of a small fishing village are pearl divers and fishermen. The patriarchal model of an Emirate family is shown over several decades. The main hero, 'Īsā, is shown as a model son and father, maintaining the values of his ancestors. That dignity and honour are the most important values to defend he learnt when eight in witnessing his father's death and the execution of his murderer:

*A sunny winter morning in a distant corner of the fish market, 'Īsā watched his father. Covered with blood he looked strange. [...] The barber took a blade and made several delicate cuts in the swollen places. [...] When the barber finished his work, Mājid stood and shook the coin before the barber. He looked to check its value and cried in anger that it was too little. Now 'Īsā's father became angry. He grabbed the coin, took his son by the hand and turned to go. [...] The barber took a knife and struck Mājid with it. The blade passed through the heart. Mājid fell. [...] The boy did not retain much in his memory of what happened next. [...] He noticed three uncles, an aunt and several guards. He did not know who had brought him to stand as a part of the gathered crowd to bear witness to the execution of his father's murderer.*³⁴⁷

Another value held by 'Īsā, and written into the Muslim world's moral code, is family loyalty. The needs of the individual seem secondary. He lives in accord with the Koran, social rules and his own convictions:

*Certain tasks before a twenty-year-old man are unavoidable. Every youth must fulfil them. The first is marriage, the second fatherhood. At this age Isa marries an uncle's daughter but three years later there is still no heir. He thinks about another wife but he loves his cousin. His income is moderate. When he was young he helped the fishermen oil their boats, cast nets. They gave him for that a few fish, which he sold at the market. He gave his mother the money he had earned.*³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ See: Biographies of Writers.

³⁴⁵ A full bibliography of the writer's works is to be found in the Biographies of Writers.

³⁴⁶ Muḥammad al-Murr, *al-Ab wa al-ibn* from the collection *Ḥubb min naw' akhar*, in: *al-'A'māl al-qaṣaṣiyya*, vol. I, Bayrūt 1992, pp. 45–53.

³⁴⁷ Muḥammad al-Murr, *al-Ab wa al-ibn*, *op.cit.*, pp. 47–49.

³⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

‘Īsā and his tragically killed father are representatives of a traditional Arab family leading a modest, hard-working and honest life. Money and material things have little meaning in their lives:

After independence many of ‘Īsā’s friends left the sea. Some lived in the son’s family, other worked in the state administration. [...] ‘Īsā continued his work, however, and looked on sceptically at the wealth coming from the discovery of oil. For the whole of his life he had spent slaving away, in hardship and toil taking what fate gave him from the sea. He despised the riches that came with no effort. Another matter was that lazy people, who had never known hard work, had now a lot of money. Even the Bedouin were careless with their money wasting thousands on weddings for their sons.³⁴⁹

He desires to pass on the values taken from home to his only son, but the matter turns out to be difficult. Young Rashīd is a representative of the consumer generation, subject to strong pressure from the surrounding world. This is not his fault. Change is everywhere, while the effects of modernisation are visible everywhere in the country. The traditional way of life and inculcation are disappearing – as ‘Īsā sees for himself – even among the Bedouin. Hence the young have a different approach to reality. Rashīd, like many of his colleagues, promotes a new style of life and entertainment, something that is a real trouble for traditionalists like his father. The young man is unable to reconcile the requirements of the modern world with traditional values and dictates. He chooses what appears pleasurable and easy to have:

Rashīd, the son, whom ‘Īsā obtained thanks to divine favour... was the victim of all the illnesses of early childhood [...] When he went to primary school he was the instigator of the worst problems. Despite the punishments meted out by his father and teacher, he did not change his behaviour. [...] As Rashīd still had not passed his exams even though he was seventeen he was still in the fourth class of primary school. His father finally gave in and took him out of school. [...] Rashīd’s job was to collect payments. He went after butchers and sailors. Most went into his own pocket. Following independence Rashīd became involved in sorting out visas. [...] He sold them for five thousand dirham. [...] Last summer he flew with his friends to Bangkok. One misty morning, when ‘Īsā and his colleague were taking fish to the nearby market at Dubai, a policeman approached them – a former friend of his son. He told the father that Rashīd had been killed during a fight at a nightclub in Bangkok.³⁵⁰

‘Īsā tries to explain to himself, in a simple way, the failures in bringing up his son. He considers that people are not always able to cope with their faults. For everything depends on God’s will and destiny:

‘Īsā was shocked by the news. He sat down disorientated. His eyes took in the waters of the Gulf. It was difficult to see detail on the other side because of the fog. He re-

³⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

³⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 51–53.

*called the body of his father and uncles stabbing the barber to death... He wiped his face and uttered in a weak voice: We come from God and to God we should return.*³⁵¹

Muḥammad al-Murr's story *al-Ab wa al-ibn* (*Father and Son*) ceases to be merely a passive account of events illustrating traditional social life; it consciously examines the problem of man and his place within modern Emirate society.

The story *Intabih li-nafsik* (*Look after Yourself*) also examines father-son conflicts.³⁵² The life of the heroes after the death of the wife and mother appears as a constant argument. For the son, Rashīd, is not interested in any job whatsoever, even though he has a good education.

*Idiot! Idiot! My God, you're a complete fool! [...] It's now four years since you did your degree and you're still on the dole. You only sleep and eat. When will you start to fend for yourself? When do you intend to get a job? [...] Everyday such criticism is leveled at Rashīd by his father Aḥmad al-Aryān. [...] The father speaks, blames, condemns and rebukes. The son is silent as a tomb, unmoved by the words of reprimand.*³⁵³

The conflict intensifies after each refusal on the part of Rashīd to undertake a job:

*When you marry, your wife will be very pleased you cook better than her. Cooking is the only thing your aunt taught you. And now you're better than she is in this unmanly art! The cooking of fish in the stench and vile smell of onions.*³⁵⁴

Aḥmad is furious on learning that Rashīd has started a new business, but with time Rashīd becomes the owner of a very popular and extremely profitable restaurant in Dubai. Aḥmad gradually accepts his son's choice:

*In the course of a year Rashīd's restaurant became well known in Dubai. The quality of the cooking brought guests from Sharjah and Ajman. The premises grew... [...] Rashīd had already 10 employees. [...] He started to drink beer with friends. [...] His aunt started to answer the calls of numerous women. [...] Rashīd was even earning a lot. Although his father was still mad, his anger started to cool together with the doubling of the sum in his son's bank account.*³⁵⁵

The story of Rashīd al-Aryān's career is a depiction of the eternal struggle of tradition with modernity, maturity and experience with youth and spontaneity. Awakening from stagnation the young man embarks on fulfilling and consecutive realisation of his goals. The conservative representative of values that is Aḥmad differently perceives the role of a man in life.

³⁵¹ Muḥammad al-Murr, *al-Ab wa al-ibn*, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

³⁵² Muḥammad al-Murr, *Intabih li-nafsik*, from the collection *Yāsmīn*, in: *al-'A'māl al-qaṣaṣiyya*, vol. II, Bayrūt 1992, pp. 107–112.

³⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

³⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

³⁵⁵ Muḥammad al-Murr, *Intabih li-nafsik*, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

Muḥammad al-Murr's, next story '*Ashā' mutā'khira* (*The Delayed Supper*),³⁵⁶ depicts images of married life in the Emirates. A drunken husband, Hamad, returns home in the middle of the night awakening his wife and demanding she prepare supper. From the description we know this to be often the case: *As always he entered making a din.*³⁵⁷ Accepting her fate, the wife makes his favourite dish.

The wife's thoughts and feelings are the central motif; the husband being a colourless, boring and lazy figure. Even after years he does not know his wife. There is no room in the relationship for feelings or spontaneity. Life boils down to duplication of actions: the late return of the husband, the demand for the same dish, clothes being folded in a specific way, the watching or not watching of already seen programmes on TV or the video.

The heroine is full of pity not only for her unstimulating husband but also for the fate that has condemned her to a boring and monotonous life. She feels lonely and unhappy. Often she wonders what had pushed her once into marriage:

*What had she loved so in Ḥamad that she had married him? His bushy moustache? His sensuous lips? His roaming gaze? His generosity? In truth she did not know! Sometimes he so annoyed her that she regretted she wasn't a Christian nun, who simply could not marry.*³⁵⁸

Comparing her fate to those of other women results in her falling into increasing sorrow. Observing her sister's husband she cannot understand why Fatima does not value her luck:

*Her sister Fāṭima had married a man who was a stay-at-home. He never stayed late anywhere at night. He never got drunk or roamed at night. He was asleep by ten and arose at five. He only went on trips with her and only went out with her. That said she had never heard a word of gratitude from her sister as to her lot which seemed to her an ideal.*³⁵⁹

On the other hand she often convinced herself that her situation was not so totally bad. For she knew women who were less happy than she was:

*Whenever the husband of her friend 'Ā'isha returned from one of his numerous foreign trips he would bring with him an album full of photographs of prostitutes from Manila, Bangkok, Bombay or Europe. He would boast of these photos, especially when there were three or four women in a single photo. [...] Maybe Ḥamad also had had a couple of flings but at least he's never spoken about it in her presence and never boasted about the fact.*³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Muḥammad al-Murr, '*Ashā' mutā'khira*, from the collection *Makān fī al-qalb*, in: *al-'A' māl al-qasha'iya*, vol. III, Bayrūt 1992, pp. 27–34.

³⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

³⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

³⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

³⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

Ḥamad's wife considers therefore that as long as her husband does not boast of his romances and shows her respect then she should be happy. All her husband's other failings are nothing in comparison with the memories of the beautiful moments she has had at his side. These have enabled her to survive the sorrow and loneliness:

*She loved the way her husband ate when he was moderately drunk. Then he delighted in food, making little noises of appreciation as he ate. He would speak of the day's events, recall their wedding or his childhood. He would be funny when he took off his colleagues from work. [...] when he was like that she dreamed that their marriage would last for an eternity.*³⁶¹

Ḥamad could sometimes be amusing. He could praise his wife, return a smile or generously buy her something:

*Ḥamad may not be an ideal husband but for that he's generous. Three days ago he had bought her a pearl necklace worth ten thousand dirhams, while on their fourth wedding anniversary he had given her earrings encrusted with diamonds and sapphires.*³⁶²

He could be tender and thoughtful to his wife:

*Don't get upset. Psychologists say that there is something positive in crying. It releases tension and acts as a valve in relation to pressure so that people don't explode,³⁶³ or succumb to romantic moods. Then he would say: A man is like a dove. A male must only have one female.*³⁶⁴

The way in which the prosaic events are presented gives one the impression as if one were viewing a miniature genre scene. Through concentrating on a small slice of reality not only are emotions conveyed but the conduct of the main heroine. Through the detailed relating to others, individuals not directly appearing in the short story or merely recalled in memories and thoughts, the narrator sketches a wider social circle, within whose framework the main characters function. Reference is made to ancestors and their love of women: *My father married three times, and his brother four, my grandfather had six wives...*³⁶⁵

The main female protagonist reveres traditional values copying the typical scheme of an obedient and loyal wife. The principles inculcated by her mother do not cease to exist and hold value even when the world around is changing. Riches and contact with Western models have not changed the model upon which a family functions in its role as the basic social cell. A marriage's worth is not measured by the expensive jewellery given to the wife, but also by modern equipment or Ḥamad's trips abroad. Hence persuading the wife to learn English points to the changing determinants of social status.

³⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

³⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 32.

³⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

³⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

³⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

Also of importance is the fact that the wife fears being left a widow or divorcee the most of all: *What would happen to her if he was to suddenly die or have an accident? [...] Those thoughts were so depressing that she flinched and attempted to push them away.*³⁶⁶

Despite the huge changes that have occurred Emirate women still remain under the protection and keep of men, therefore their loss would constitute not only emotional loss but also material. One matter of import is the fact that we never hear the name of the heroine. Her identity is limited to her being Ḥamad's wife. Being a wife fills the entire world for the protagonist; it is the source of her sorrows, frustrations, pain and joy.

The limiting of a partner's freedom is taken up by Muḥammad al-Murr in the short story *Zawāj bārid* (*A Cold Marriage*).³⁶⁷ Equally in this story we do not know the heroine's name. She is, however, the opposite of Ḥamad's wife from the above mentioned story. In all the parts of the work the narrator shows her indifference towards her husband:

*During these weekly journeys Aḥmad many times tried to establish conversation of any sort with his wife. But she would rarely reply. He attempted to interest her in various topics. [...] When he spoke she looked into the limitless yellow desert, ordered on the one side by the sea and on the other by the sky. And she said nothing. She never commented on anything.*³⁶⁸

In each of the five subchapters the wife's attitude appears proper. She impeccably carries out her household and wifely duties, however she is cold and emotionless:

*Aḥmad felt dizzy and stopped the car. He felt nauseous. His wife wiped his face with a handkerchief and gave him some water to drink. She displayed no emotion. At home when once her younger sister had cut her hand she had been depressed and had run like mad searching for medicines and a bandage.*³⁶⁹

Aḥmad in turn is a sensitive man, who tries to be a loving and sensitive husband. He tries always to make contact with his wife and to improve the relations between them. He yearns for an emotional tie with his wife:

*He tried to change her. When a pet shop opened in a neighbouring block he bought her a Siamese cat for a thousand dirham. She fed it and cared for it but she never cuddled it and did not talk to it. And the cat meowed, scratched the sheets with its claws and sometimes even ripped them. Aḥmad's wife showed not the least interest and made no comments whatsoever. Then he bought her six canaries. And she as normal showed no interest in them. She never even mentioned them until two months later she told Aḥmad that one of them had died.*³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁶⁷ Muḥammad al-Murr, *Zawāj bārid*, from the collection *al-Mufājāʾi*, in: *al-ʿAʾmāl al-qaṣaṣiyya*, vol. II, Bayrūt 1992, pp. 55–61.

³⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

³⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

³⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

Despite Aḥmad's constant attempts he is unable to make contact with his wife. Finally he decides to divorce her:

*Aḥmad could no longer stand the glassy and cold face of his wife. Six months after the wedding he told her that divorce would be the best solution. And she refuted nothing, asked for no explanation. She simply looked at him in the same way as always. Nodded her head and went off to pack her four suitcases.*³⁷¹

Muḥammad al-Murr's story is a criticism of the institution of traditional marriage. The author sees the drama of the couple, who are forced to marry. For the imposing of traditional forms of marriage is still one of the greatest problems in the countries of the Gulf.

In the short story *I'alān fī jarīda (A Short Paragraph in the Paper)*³⁷² the author touches on one of the biggest problems of the contemporary world, one that touches also the Emirates, i.e. drug trafficking. Immigrants from poor Asian countries are used by the gang bosses. The hero of the piece is a Pakistani, Rawnāq 'Alī, who came ten years earlier to Dubai in search of a better life. We know nothing of his past. All we learn is that he has no passport or any other documents enabling him to undertake work legally. His lack of Arabic also does not help. Consequently he becomes an easy target for drug traffickers. At a critical moment he makes the acquaintance of an influential and rich Muslim Hajjī Maṣṣūr, who helps him start a new life. Maṣṣūr finds him a flat, teaches him to drive, helps him get a passport and visa. Finally he often reminds him to faithfully serve his benefactor and employer:

*Have you forgotten how you came with me to see 'Āisha in the Hotel Qadir in your dirty reeking rags like a bag of bones, without a job, a passport and documents?*³⁷³

Rawnāq 'Alī worked for Hajjī Maṣṣūr as a supplier of hashish and opium for eight years. Despite leading a full life he was constantly filled with a fear which intensified after the suicide of his friend 'Azīz: *He really liked him. He enjoyed chatting to him, his jokes, witty remarks and his deep blue eyes.*³⁷⁴ The event aroused great anxiety in Rawnāq 'Alī, who started to fear that he would be arrested by the police and sentenced for drug trafficking: *He saw the shadow of a policeman on the corner of every street, and smelt an informer in each and every client.*³⁷⁵

We get to know Rawnāq 'Alī two weeks after 'Azīz's death, at the moment he informs his employer and benefactor that he is giving up the job. It is impossible to determine the exact time of events. All we know is that it is Friday afternoon, after prayers and the sermon. Events unfold in a car heading through the streets of Dubai. A conversation is in progress between Rawnāq 'Alī and Hajjī Maṣṣūr, in which the latter accuses him of a lack of gratitude and of being disloyal: *You want to betray me. You want to cut off the*

³⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 60–61.

³⁷² Muḥammad al-Murr, *I'alān fī jarīda* from the collection *Naṣīb*, in: *al-'A'māl al-qāṣiyya*, vol. II, *op.cit.*, pp. 219–224.

³⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 221.

³⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 220.

³⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

hand that has fed you, educated you and taken you out into the world.³⁷⁶ He goes on to prove that every aspect of his present life is better than in Pakistan:

*You live beyond your means. Three thousand dirhams from the taxi and six or seven from me gives ten thousand dirhams a month. An income beyond the wildest dreams of your father or ancestors. You scoundrel! You idler! You dog! My God, you just don't care!*³⁷⁷

During the conversation Hajjī Maṣṣūr is upset. Sometimes he allows himself a sarcastic smile. We know him to be a ruthless business man, for whom only profit matters, and not the well-being of an employee. He has nothing against increasing his salary: *If you supply more goods, you'll earn more.*³⁷⁸

However Rawnāq 'Alī's mental state does not allow him to work further with Maṣṣūr. He does not want to live in fear and tension. This is underlined by the image of a carefree boy from the mosque: *He regretted he could not be like him. Like a small boy who knows no crime, no problems or sin.*³⁷⁹

Rawnāq 'Alī is determined to leave. Then Hajjī Maṣṣūr tells him he is free to go. They arrive at a rubbish strewn property where Rawnāq 'Alī is to be paid for the work he has done. He is, however, anxious: *The place aroused fear in him. At the sight of the huge tank filled with fluid he shook with fear.*³⁸⁰ Hajjī Maṣṣūr does not listen to the desperate shouts and Rawnāq 'Alī's begging. A week later in the local paper a paragraph appears reporting Rawnāq's disappearance.

The story is thematically part of the current dealing with the problem of foreign workers. They are poor people, who upon arriving in the Emirates quickly realise the impossibility for their dreams to become reality. As a result of irregular relations between employer and employed life loses its meaning.

Poetry enjoys immense status in Arab countries. An Arab saying goes that 'There is a poet behind every boulder' and it is poetry and its creation that is the subject of the next short story by Muḥammad al-Murr: *'Ammaka kāna shā'irān! (Your Uncle was a Poet!)*.³⁸¹

The main hero, Khalifa, dreams of becoming a poet and his hopes grow quickly when his mother tells him that his uncle also used to write poetry. This newly acquired information starts to dominate his life and shut out everything else:

Khalifa was a young government employee and read a lot of newspapers and magazines. He believed that many things are down to genes. His voice, for instance, was high like his uncle's. His father had been bald and what do you know – his hair had started to thin. The dark grey eyes he had from his mother. Talent was also hereditary. His uncle had been a poet. [...] His mother's claim – Your uncle had been a poet – would not leave him alone. He had only managed to find two poems allegedly written

³⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 222.

³⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 223.

³⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 220.

³⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 224.

³⁸¹ Muḥammad al-Murr, 'Ammaka kāna shā'irān! From the collection *Ṣadāqa*, in: *al-'A 'māl al-qaṣaṣiyya*, vol. I, Bayrūt 1992, pp. 261–264.

*by his uncle. He started to read everything on the subject of folk poetry in Emirate newspapers. Yes, he could become a poet like his uncle. Talent was present in the family.*³⁸²

When he decides to write a poem and send it to a popular magazine he has already started to imagine his future fame and the problems with girls that would certainly be interested in him and the vision of him taking his rightful place amongst the poetic great. Reality is, however, not so pleasant and Khalifa's work is rejected because of its mediocrity. The last line has an exceptionally bitter and ironic tone:

*On the third day in the column for folk poetry, in the corner with short messages from the editor appeared the words: To Khalifa Muhammad: Your poem is weak in content and contains mistakes. It is a long way off true folk poetry, but I will say you have a neat hand.*³⁸³

Khalifa is not only the main protagonist he is in effect the only one. With the exception of his mother and Samā, who are of note for their influence on the hero. Khalifa perfectly reflects the Arab mentality. To this day poetry is unusually important to them and present in their lives, therefore a poet enjoys social recognition. And it appears that this is the story's main message – to show the important role of poetry for Arabs.

Muhammad al-Murr like other Gulf writers started to question the place and role of women in society. In *al-Qarār al-khaṭīr* (*An Important Decision*)³⁸⁴ the heroine is 'Āisha, a twenty-something-year old, who is involved with a married man:

*She will tell Sālim of her important decision. Their relationship must end! She had thought everything through the night before. An affair which has lasted two years is not easy to end. Their first meeting was dead ordinary. He had come to cash a cheque at the bank she worked in. [...] They met erratically. He lived in Abu Dhabi, and she in Dubai. However the breaks only intensified the passion and yearning.*³⁸⁵

'Āisha wants to get married for any price. Every situation she associates with marriage and being an old maid:

*Yesterday one of her old school friends got married. 'Āisha was taken aback by the ugliness of the bride. She remembered that she had not been much to look at in school but had expected her to have become more attractive with age. The groom was her cousin on her father's side and the marriage had been arranged by the family. 'Āisha was highly critical of her own family. She had only one cousin, who had married years ago. Why did her uncle have no more sons who were older or at least her age for her to marry?*³⁸⁶

³⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 262.

³⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

³⁸⁴ Muhammad al-Murr, *al-Qarār al-khaṭīr* from the collection *Shay' min al-ḥanān*, in: *al-'A'māl al-qasha'iya*, vol. I, *op.cit.*, pp. 387–394.

³⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 390.

³⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 388.

Of interest from a literary point of view is the way the narrative is constructed, we become acquainted with the heroine from various angles, in various situations. Her friend Fā'iza allows us to understand her character:

*Fā'iza rang her, talking of sales. Fā'iza earned more than 'Āisha, but for all that was mean and checked the price of everything she bought. She would buy everything if it was reduced. The probability of her getting married was slim. She was already twenty nine years old and had a terrible character. She had passed over three excellent opportunities to marry as a result of her own foolishness.*³⁸⁷

'Āisha is presented as sensitive, interested in the world, enjoying acceptance and love. She is witty. She is, admittedly, suffering a crisis resulting from her personal situation, but despite everything she cannot be called an unhappy woman:

*'Āisha read poetry and prose, she wrote diaries and engaged in social undertakings. [...] She still loved the world and desired to find out more about it.*³⁸⁸

Muḥammad al-Murr is one of the best known Emirate writers. His stories reflect the social changes in the country. The reader easily picks up the climate of the times, experiences together with the protagonists passion and tragedies, is overwhelmed by the descriptions of places and the heroes representing various milieux of the contemporary Emirates. Finally, he becomes aware of the mechanism in action within someone embroiled in social relations that define and shape him forcing him at the same time to adopt imposed rules of behaviour.

³⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 392–393.

³⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 393.

Chapter II

The Development of the Emirate Short Story

At present the vast majority of Emirate writers are published within journals, magazines and bulletins. Beside those mentioned, the most well-known writers include: Maryam Jum‘a Faraj, Salmā Maṭar Sayf, Amīna ‘Abd Allāh Bū Shihāb, Laylā Aḥmad, Bāsima Muḥammad Yūnis.

Maryam Jum‘a Faraj³⁸⁹ presents various aspects of the new reality of the Arab Emirates. The collection of stories entitled *Fayrūz (Turquoise)* may be seen as literary social criticism. The situation of the individual is the main subject of the works in the collection. The stories: *Fayrūz (Turquoise)* and *‘Abbār (The Carrier)* in a direct way confront the past with the present. The heroes still functioning according to the regulations in force prior to the discovery of oil are unable to find themselves within the new reality which requires of them, first and foremost, a change in their hitherto way of life. The works *Wujūh (Faces)* and *Masāfa (Remoteness)* presents heroes lost in interpersonal relations, ones attempting to define anew their own identity as well as a place within the reality that surrounds them. While the short stories *Thuqūb (Holes)* and *Ar-Rīḥ (The Wind)* depict man’s struggle with nature and the forces of nature. They depict the defencelessness of the individual in the face of dominant and unpredictable forces. Man in Maryam Faraj’s works is in a losing position, whether this is in relation to the society he lives in or the forces of nature, or simply against disease and illness, as is the case in the short story *Ṣāliḥ al-Mubārak*. The hero is a man suffering from cancer. His only hope of a cure is the figure of a mysterious miracle worker Ṣāliḥ al-Mubārak, who in accordance with folk sources is to appear unexpectedly and treat human suffering. The ill man’s wife assures him that nobody like that exists and that it is all pure superstition. Yet the man believes, to the end, in the miracle. Finally the hero dies taking the story of Ṣāliḥ al-Mubārak with him to the grave together with his last hope. Actually the only story in the collection to end positively is *Shu‘ūr (Feelings)*. The main figure Fāṭima is a nurse. Initially she works on the children’s ward, where in the face of human misfortune and disease she must keep a cool head and carry out her duties. A testing moment comes when Fāṭima is transferred to the men’s ward. The girl recalls her childhood, when at the age of ten she was forbidden to play with boys. Fāṭima from that moment has not only become reserved in encounters with men but also has created psychological barriers in her relations with men.

The writer describes the hospital, emphasising the atmosphere, the fear, the smell of medicines and the sight of blood. The heroine presents her difficult situation and struggle with the patients. Despite these difficulties she does not give up and faces up to her own prejudices overcoming herself into the bargain.³⁹⁰ Out of a confrontation of the past with

³⁸⁹ See: Biographies of Writers.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Badr ‘Abd al-Malik, *al-Qiṣṣa al-qaṣīra wa aṣ-ṣawt an-nisā’i fī dawlat al-Imārāt al-‘arabiyya al-muttaḥida*, ash-Shāriqa 1995, pp. 113–149.

the present Fāṭima emerges victorious, for she is able to reconcile her emotions and feelings with the demands of the moment.

Maryam Faraj's heroes are lost, presented in isolation if not physical then mental. Their life stories are tangled and abound with tragic events. The sudden changes that occur in their lives not only shape their personalities but also lead them to madness. Madness is clearly a feature within the entire collection. This results from disturbance in the balance between what is spiritual and material, between the past and the present, poverty and riches. We encounter such a situation in the works *'Abbār (The Carrier)*, *Wujūh (Faces)* and *Fayrūz (Turquoise)*. Madness results in the hero of the story *Darwīsh (Dervish)* being unable to conclude healthy relations with the surroundings in which he lives and is compared to a vegetable. A similar motif appears in the work *Badriyya* and beside alienation shows the sense of not belonging to the human race.

Madness, whose source is always disturbed relations with the external world expresses itself also through natural phenomena, as happens in the work *Thuqūb (Holes)*. The rain that has been awaited by the inhabitants of a village arrives with such force that it destroys everything they had managed to build. What they impatiently awaited becomes the source of their misfortune.

The writer employs various registers which enrich her prose. Maryam Faraj sometimes switches to urban dialect or employs the 'broken' Arabic of foreigners. The composition is noted for its detail. Given the nature of the short story this is usually a feature negatively affecting the fluency of the action. Maryam Faraj's works give an unnatural impression through the constant division into new motifs, which does not allow the reader to concentrate on the fundamental subject of the story.³⁹¹

Salmā Maṭar Sayf³⁹² is one of the most interesting Emirate writers. Her originality in form and expression of clearly defined thoughts illustrated by a concrete story has ensured her enduring popularity. Form and content play a key role. Women are the central figure within Salmā Maṭar's short stories. Social relations concentrate themselves around them. A woman has a considerable influence on the shaping of these relations, though at the same time she is subjected to outside influences. The writer accentuates the situation in which the heroine has to subordinate herself to the models of behaviour reproduced by generations. An attempt at dialogue with traditions in this matter is strictly linked to the struggle that women most often have to conduct alone. Dependence on male protection, the disfavour of the family, and first and foremost the loneliness of the woman are the subjects which constantly wind their way through her work.³⁹³ Short stories such as *Sā'a wa a'ūd (I'll Be Back in a Moment)* or *Al-'Urs (The Wedding Reception)* shows how painful the struggle with their unusually difficult fate is for their heroines. Escape from family, resistance to the father or even attempts to commit suicide are motifs that repeat

³⁹¹ Cf. Anwar al-Khaṭīb, *Adab al-mar'a fī al-Imārāt*, in: *Al-multaqā ath-thānī li-l-kitābāt al-qaṣṣaṣiyya wa ar-riwā'iyya fī dawlat al-Imārāt al-'arabiyya al-muttaḥida*, ash-Shāriqa 1992, pp. 83–101.

³⁹² See: Biographies of Writers.

³⁹³ Salmā Maṭar Sayf, collection of short stories *'Ushba*, Dar al-Kalimāt li-l-nashr 1988.

themselves often in the works of this Emirate female writer. They constitute a form of dialogue with tradition and the reproduced models of social behaviour.

The heroine of the work *An-Nashīd (Song)*, by name Duhma, is an example of a woman imprisoned at home and isolated from the external world. In point of fact Duhma never had the possibility to become a part of society. Closer to her are animals, amongst which she spends more time than with people. A deformed personality and a distorted way of perceiving reality are the fruit of the rigorism enforced in the name of adherence to tradition. The victims of such perverted schemes of behaviour are not only the individuals concerned but the whole of society. Salmā Maṭar Sayf shows through the tragedy of her heroine the misfortune faced by the community living around Duhma.

In *Al-'Urs (The Wedding Reception)* we have an example of social permission for women to be treated as objects, almost as goods to be sold. Ḥamāma is given in marriage five times and yet she has never been given the right to decide who will be her future partner. Threatened with violence and the perversions of subsequent husbands she can do no more than escape from them, in this way saving her own life and dignity. The heroine's name is significant – Ḥamāma, which means "dove". In effect Ḥamāma, identified with peace and reconciliation, becomes an innocent victim of the rules that govern society.

Very often Salmā Maṭar constructs her stories on a scheme in which a reality abounding in negative phenomena is confronted with a persistent attempt to overcome the adversities of one's lot. Often the only redemption from misfortune is death, as is the case in *'Ushba (The Herb)*.

Of immense importance in the short story is its beginning and end. The former draws the reader into the reality while through its forms and content concentrates the reader's attention or leaves him indifferent. While the ending underlines, first and foremost, the position and views of the author. It shows the concluding of the events, the evolution of the heroes, the changes in attitudes as well as defining new perspectives within the context of the events presented. Salmā Maṭar in a most conscious way creates not only the heroes of her works but also controls to the very end the events played out in her stories. The writer intimately knows all of her characters. Their lives, outlooks, social adherence are clearly defined. The author knows exactly when, where and in what circumstances the most important events are to take place.

Salmā Maṭar Sayf does not limit herself to the intriguing start to the narrative; the beginning of a story in Salmā Maṭar brings with it signs of the direction it will take. In as far as the beginnings of Salmā Maṭar's works are extremely clear and expressive, the endings are an open matter. Most often events conclude unhappily, with death or disappearance. The heroine of the work *Sā'a wa a'ūd (I'll Be Back in a Moment)* has more than likely perished. Everything points to Ḥamāma from the short story *Al-'Urs (The Wedding Reception)* dying after the fifth marriage. The story *An-Nashīd (Song)* ends with the whipping of the main heroine.

Death seems to be the only salvation for Salmā Maṭar's heroines. Each is young, with a life and future in front of them. This intentional contradiction is undoubtedly one of the most important elements in the works' composition. Its purpose is to ask the question as to whether everything should end as it does, or whether other solutions could have existed. The death of the heroines is the most final of solutions, while escape from reality

is an irrational world of fantasy, as is the case in the short story *az-Zahra (The Flower)* or *'Ushba (The Herb)*.³⁹⁴

It is worth drawing attention to the language used. The stories are full of poetry and have a deep lyrical quality. Poetry is not alone in enhancing the narrative but does constitute an indispensable part. Only through the language of lyricism is one able to decipher Salmā Maṭar Sayf's message, resulting in reflection and deeper analysis.³⁹⁵

The short stories of another Emirate female writer, **Laylā Aḥmad**,³⁹⁶ are political in character, even though they at times deal with social problems, the homeland and generational conflict. Man is the most important. For a homeland can only function correctly if its citizens are able to discern matters of importance.

In the collection of stories *al-Khayma, al-mihrajān wa al-waṭan*³⁹⁷ (*A Tent, a Festival, a Homeland*) recourse is made to the symbolism of the homeland. In the short story *Kannāra* (Lira) the symbol is a woman. At other times the symbol is the joint efforts of men and women, like, for example in *Ar-Raqṣ taḥta radhadh al-waṭan* (*Dance in the Rain of the Homeland*). Another time the writer leaves symbolism for direct narrative transfer. This is the case in *Rā'iha (The Smell)*, *Iṭār (The Frame)* or *Khadsh (The Flaw)*.

The starting point for reflection on the homeland is often recollections, like in *Kannāra* (Lira) or *al-Khayma, al-mihrajān wa al-waṭan* (*A Tent, a Festival, a Homeland*). Homeland in Laylā Aḥmad's understanding is not an abstract concept, but a living being represented through people. The more love within them, good and sense of community the greater import is taken on by the word 'homeland'. Divisions and mutual discords lead to the impoverishment of the common good and its weakening.

In *al-Khayma, al-mihrajān wa al-waṭan* (*A Tent, a Festival, a Homeland*) as well as *al-Mawt fī qarya* (*Death in the Country*) the mutual complementing of a woman and man in the harmony of love becomes the symbol of the unity of both concepts – earth and homeland, in the material and spiritual dimensions. Marriage as the union and alliance of two subjects such as homeland and its citizen are clearly visible in the work *al-Masāfa* (*Remoteness*). In this case consciousness is the bond of a citizen to a concrete country, a tie that grows with the acquiring of life experience and the passing of time. The homeland is a faithful wife, waiting always and to the end for the husband's return.

A question closely linked to that of the homeland is its state as expressed by the relations between its inhabitants. Here is generational conflict within the realities of a rapidly developing country. Two generations: the one that remembers the difficulties of the period pre economic development and that which has never known poverty, and their coexistence within a single state.

The story *Hashraja (The Last Breath)* is divided into two parts; each symbolising one of the generations. The first is represented by the father, who, as a young man, planted

³⁹⁴ Cf. Anwar al-Khaṭīb, *Adab al-mar'a fī al-Imārāt*, in: *Al-multaqā ath-thānī...*, op.cit., pp. 36–62.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Badr 'Abd al-Malik, *Al-Qiṣṣa al-qasīra wa ṣawt an-nisā'i fī dawlat al-Imārāt al-'arabiyya al-muttaḥida*, ash-Shāriqa 1995, pp. 61–111.

³⁹⁶ See: Biographies of Writers.

³⁹⁷ Laylā Aḥmad, collection of short stories *al-Khayma, al-mihrajān wa al-waṭan* [n.p.] 1984.

a palm grove. After fifty years he awaits death in expectation of the final meeting with his sons. Part two examines the contemporary generation, personified by the three sons. Despite the mother's pleas none come to meet their father. Each finds an excuse. The writer uses simple devices to express her views in the public debate as to the nature of the modern Emirates. Work, the idea of family, doggedness in achieving goals, and the unwavering labour of the father are contrasted with the egoism and heartlessness of the sons.

The economic changes have not only affected this remodelling of traditional values. Economic development has upset a stable social structure via the influx of numerous foreigners. The question of responsibility for future generations is raised against the backcloth of the increasing number of foreign childminders. This is directly addressed in the story *Rā'iḥa* (*The Smell*). The heroine initially thinks nothing of the consequences of leaving her child in the care of a foreign nanny. She realises, however, fairly quickly that her influence on her son is weakening. The writer directly points out that children are not only the earthly possessions of their parents but equally the language, traditions and values that constitute identity. In the story *Khadsh* (*The Flaw*) Laylā Aḥmad addresses the problem of a child's disturbed psychological balance.

Space as distance within various concepts is also an important element in Laylā Aḥmad's work. One of her stories is entitled *Al-Masāfa* (*Remoteness*). This refers equally to the human sphere conducted at the two points deemed birth and death, as equally within the spatial expanse that divides people and in addition the divide between the citizen and the state. The question of the homeland is analysed often in her work resulting in an infusion of the spirit of song or an anthem always dedicated to the homeland as well as man himself.³⁹⁸

The next female voice in Emirate literature is that of **Amīna 'Abd Allāh Bū Shihāb**.³⁹⁹ Like her colleagues she relates her work to the current problems of the UAE. Amīna Bū Shihāb analyses the social situation in the country and the historical context. She does not only describe the external manifestations of these social phenomena but searches for their causes in the near and distant past. For the writer social relations are nothing more than a continuation of forms of dependence between the representatives of various economic groupings.

Khumays – the hero of *Zahīra ḥāmiyya* (*The Scorching Afternoon*) comes from a poor family. The man painfully becomes aware of what the rich and influential descendants of the pearl fisherman and traders can achieve. Social status is determined by money and material goods. In such a society relations between a captain of a boat and an ordinary pearl diver are transferred to other spheres of life. This model passed down through generations has endured and has only somewhat evolved in modern times. According to Khumays the world has changed not at all. The occurrences of the past are still clearly visible. After his wife is raped he is unable to find his place in the world. He works as a taxi driver and day in, day out he observes those he meets. This convinces him that the

³⁹⁸ Cf. Anwar al-Khaṭīb, *Adab al-mar'a fī al-Imārāt*, in: *Al-multaqā ath-thānī...*, op.cit, pp. 63–83.

³⁹⁹ See: Biographies of Writers.

modern world has changed little. Seeing the rich heirs of the former order fills him with hate and anger. He wants to stone them, but is too weak to fulfil his madcap scheme. He remains on the periphery, abandoned with his burden, bitter and condemned to defeat.

The author depicts the conflict between two social strata. This same, age-old division into the rich merchants and captains and the poor pearl fisherman remains in a somewhat modified form to this day. Modern society is the heir to the systems of dependence of the past.

The figure of the main hero is somewhat pushed to the background within this sociological analysis. His personality is not revealed, making the character difficult to assess. The drama experienced leaves the hero of *Ṣahīra ḥāmiyya* (*The Scorching Afternoon*) completely devoid of hope that he will ever change anything in his life. Khumays' opposite is *Mahra* from the story of the same name by Amīna Bū Shihāb. The story depicts the inhabitants of a small village which suffers from a poverty it cannot break out of. This is exploited by the heartless Sulaymān, who appears every now and then and in exchange for a sizeable dowry takes as a wife one of the local girls. The marriages do not last long, however, as Sulaymān divorces after a few months. Even though the villagers hate him they never think of opposing him. This makes the reaction to the young *Mahra*, who says what she thinks about the debauched man, all the stronger. Even though there is an official marriage, the girl does not surrender to Sulaymān even in the face of violence and insults. This only increases her resolve. Thanks to her attitude Sulaymān has to leave the village. Her stance not only surprises all the villagers but becomes an inspiration for others to act. Amīna 'Abd Allāh Bū Shihāb is saying that reality should be shaped by decisive actions. An inherited social system is not ascribed to a given collective forever. There exist realistic possibilities to modify it and improve those aspects that violate the interests of individuals, particularly the weakest.

In undertaking a social subject the writer is attempting to concentrate the reader on the conflicts resulting from a given situation. This aims at depicting the incessant abrasion of two realities. The characters carved out by the writer are highly realistic, which means that the stories Amīna 'Abd Allāh Bū Shihāb tells have the credibility to arouse reflection in the reader.⁴⁰⁰

The presentation of the complicated relations between men and women (father – mother – daughter – son – husband – wife – lover) are examined by **Bāsima Muḥammad Yūnis**.⁴⁰¹ Her stories talk of human suffering and are a reflection on the everyday affairs of an average Emirate citizen. She demands equal rights for man and women. She is capable of creating an original psychological portrait through questioning the complicated situations in which women have to function. An example is the tale *Istidhātha* (*The Call for Help*), in which the voice of despair mixes with one of hope, and all this due to the lack of heirs. The heroine lives in a backward and unjust society where everyone, particularly women, have designated stereotypical roles. The failure to produce children

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. Anwar al-Khaṭīb, *Adab al-mar'a fī al-Imārāt*, in: *Al-multaqā ath-thānī...*, op.cit., pp. 101–116.

⁴⁰¹ See: Biographies of Writers.

results in a personal crisis for her as a woman and member of Arab society. Finally, the woman, driven by despair, escapes into a world of magic and succumbs to spells. The drama is enhanced when her psychically destroyed husband is crushed by the wife's obsession. This story, like others by Bāsima Yūnis illustrates social injustice. They also display the author's attitudes to the reality around her, a society secretly playing out unseen dramas, particularly for women. Universal humanistic tendencies come to the fore, proclaiming greater freedom for man and women in their choice of career and partner.

The collections herein dealt with are a diagnosis of the problems – social, existential and moral. They throw light on family and marital problems. They are collections actively involved in the shaping of the reality within which they exist. These women writers are as equally understandable for readers from the East as from the West for the universal motifs of love and patriotism running through them are the source of creative inspiration in all cultures.⁴⁰²

The Emirates over time. Such words come to the reader's mind upon reading the volume of stories of **Ibrāhīm Mubārak**⁴⁰³ entitled *Dajr ṭā'ir al-layl* (*The Weary Bird of Night*). The individual stories create a series of drowsy picture and scenes. The author's work is full of nostalgia towards the world which has passed. We find the quintessence of this feeling in the title story, in which Mubārak describes a wide spectrum of events from the life of a falconer. For the purposes of understanding both the content as well as the meaning, one should first consider the important role which was played and which is still played by falconry in the life of the sons of the desert, which is deemed as a honourable and elitist task. The story is based on dissonance between the two main characters. Hamdan, an old and experienced falconer, who still remembers the olden times of the hunt, symbolizing what has passed. Sa'īd, his student, is the symbol of what has come, meaning the metropolises and night clubs bursting with life. The bond and the plane which links the past and the present is the falcon, *that does not know anything else, apart from what is known to the desert*.⁴⁰⁴

From the very beginning, we are witnesses to Sa'īd's internal dilemma. On the one hand, he values the traditions of his ancestors and the old art of falconry, on the other, he frequents cafes, enjoying the fullness of his prosperity. As Mubārak writes:

*In winter, I travel through the desert to hunt, and in the summer I am a regular at the cafes and clubs, not seeing anything wrong with it.*⁴⁰⁵

Sa'īd is the one who keeps up with the pace of the changing everyday life in the Emirates. The key moment in the story takes place when he visits one of the many venues. The atmosphere, saturated with smoke, loud music, men and women yelling, becomes

⁴⁰² Barbara Michalak-Pikulska, *Rozwój prozy w Zjednoczonych Emiratach Arabskich*, in: *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, no 1–2, Warszawa 2001, pp. 96–101.

⁴⁰³ See: *Biographies of Writers*.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibrāhīm Mubārak, *Dajr ṭā'ir al-layl*, in: *Dajr ṭā'ir al-layl*, ash-Shāriqa 2005, p. 96.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

the area of the final internal conflict. A drunk man frees Sa'īd's falcon. Petrified by the close space and flying blindly, the bird chases away all the customers. In seeing this, the owner realises that the city is lathed with illness and that true values lie in the desert. He calms the falcon with the following words: *One day, they will all flee. You... You will never flee.*⁴⁰⁶

With this story, Ibrāhīm Mubārak makes a critical assessment of the direction in which his country is heading and in a clear manner is for cherishing freedom and respect for tradition. Despite the victory of the old ideals, there is a lack, unfortunately, of hope for a better tomorrow and the reader may experience the author's uncertainty and fear in terms of the future.

The motif of the need for freedom is also present in a different work entitled *Nashīd al-jidār* (*The Song of the Wall*). This piece shows Mubārak's political convictions and his stance towards matters of the homeland. In it, the writer goes back to the period of the strong influence of the British crown on the countries of the Gulf, and what follows, equally for the Emirates.

The correct canvas of the story is skilfully intertwined with dialogue and poetic, symbolic images, full of metaphors. The boundary between prose and the storyline and the in fact mystical approach to the content and the manner of narration fades away. Two young, anonymous characters are having a discussion on the topic of freedom. One of them states that they are *the roots of the palm trees and the mountains, the song of the coast and the sand, the agitation of the sea, by asking the rhetorical question as to who can overcome such a bond?*⁴⁰⁷ In opposition, animals such as wolves, foxes or dogs appear. They constitute the unspoken threat, the symbol hanging over freedom, the final evil in the form of the imposed yolk of a foreign nation. The culmination takes place when the main characters get closer to the allegorical Dog House. Apart from the omnipresent darkness, they do not lose spirit. The gloomy walk is halted when they notice the silhouette of a black beast standing behind them.

In placing typical narration to the side, the author uses a lyrical digression, describing the eternal bond between man and the sea. For man, it is a song which soothes the heart of those searching for freedom and the point of fleeing to vast spaces. *Freedom is like a wave which, in enveloping the sand which it longed for, sings a wondrous song.*⁴⁰⁸

The main characters escape in the direction of the sea that washes their weary feet, like a caring mother. The breaking waves, caressing the beach like nymphs, become the background for the escape of the anonymous young men. It is a search for those whose footsteps have been hidden by the sea.

The above story is undoubtedly one of the most metaphoric in the entire volume. The dissonance between the sea and land is an axis and the plane on which the action takes place. The animals are a similarly mysterious metaphor, which the main characters are trying to defend themselves against. It seems that through images of dogs and vultures, Ibrāhīm Mubārak attempted to summarize and show the former influence of the British.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

The story entitled *Hulm 'Ibbār (The Ferryman's Dream)* continues the main idea of the volume. It begins with a poetic description of the city. The author's artistic and suggestive language draws various images for the reader. He compares the ferrymen on the coast to the sea birds searching for small fish. From his point of view, the city located on the Gulf is both the mistress and the child of the sea. He owes the blossoming and prosperity to it. The real main characters – the ferrymen, grappling with it, are located in the background of a well prospering city.

The action of the final part of the story transfers onto present times. The times in which the ferrymen abandoned their boats, and human muscles have been replaced with motors working incessantly both at night and at day. Ibrāhīm Mubārak devotes a lot of time to simple people, coming from the lower classes – such as the title ferrymen, the earlier mentioned falconers or hunters and sailors.

In another story entitled *Rajul lā ḡill lahu (A Man with no Shadow)* the author introduces us to Muḥammad – the main character, who, in contradiction with the other residents of Umm Suqaym does not owe his life to the gifts of the sea. He devotes his efforts and time to manage the farm, based mainly on the raising of goats, cows and chickens. Already from the first pages of the text we learn that the main character prefers the life of a recluse, shying away from other residents. *He is building his house distanced from other houses by a sandy space.*⁴⁰⁹ He is living the life he chose for himself and from which he will never resign. He himself repeats that he does not need anything apart from what surrounds him and what makes up his world. Usually calm, he becomes agitated when children from the village chase or in any other way pester his beloved animals.

Children from the village have become accustomed to using the sandy space neighbouring Muḥammad's homestead as a pitch to play ball. They had always come in large numbers, focused on the crazy chase of the ball, until dusk fell. It was often the case that in the fervour of the fight, the ball was thrown in the direction of the recluse, which ended in insults and curses.

These hit and run tactics lasted until the time in which Umm Suqaym was transformed from a cosy village into a large city of people who do not know each other. Along with the change in the surroundings, there is also a symbolic change of climate in the story. The air becomes muggy and humid, and people cannot manage without air conditioning. This entire image clearly shows Ibrāhīm Mubārak's reluctance to the changes which are taking place, the world heading towards annihilation. People have lost their initial strength, shaped by the strict conditions of the desert to luxury and prosperity. Muḥammad is the symbol of loyalty to the path once chosen.

Ibrāhīm Mubārak introduces a strong poetic element to his prose. This allows the discussed topics to take on a magical expression, despite their ostensible simplicity. The applied style, the clear, yet not banal metaphor and the schematic symbols comprise the writer's strong side. The specifics of the vocabulary used by the writer are of undoubted importance. He uses names characteristic to the countries of the Gulf, such as *'ibāra*, which means the same as a small paddle boat. His work is saturated with his fascination with the sea. The vast expanse of the water in the stories is both the background of the stories (*The Ferryman's Dream*), one of the main characters (*The Song of the Wall*)

⁴⁰⁹ Ibrāhīm Mubārak, *Rajul lā ḡill lahu*, in: *Dajr ṭā'ir al-layl*, op.cit., p. 35.

or the motif bonding the entirety, a type of buckle giving the author's piece a breath of refreshment.

The author wants to relay important and universal contents. He describes his family background and life, which he observed while growing up. There is no imposed reflection of a social nature. It allows for them to be followed gradually, along with the development of the plot and the fate of the characters. Thanks to the uncommon characters, one can learn about the new tendencies in thinking on society and politics. The characters are differentiated in terms of their opinions as well as their level of involvement in social matters.

The story entitled *Shitā'* from the *aṭ-Ṭaḥlub (Algae)* collection is worth noting. Ibrāhīm Mubārak presents the history of a man, who *was christened by the salty drops of the sea, and his heart opened like the gate to heaven. The sea sparkled in his eyes from the first day. His life path has been paved.*⁴¹⁰ From the cited fragment of the story it follows that the man, from the moment of birth, knew that his destiny was to become a fisherman. A wide range of comparisons, *i.e. men's backs are like shooting bows, and the hands like arrows repairing the destroyed and worn boats*⁴¹¹ helps us imagine the fishermen. The next fragment: *his wife prepared a small suitcase for him, she put some Indian food in it along with some small photographs*⁴¹² informs the reader that the character has a warm and caring loved one, who prepares his things for him, before he goes out to sea. Comparing the woman to a lighthouse shows how important the wife is to the main character. She is a pillar, towards which he has very intense feelings, he can always count on her and can always return to her. The author presents the reality in which the main character lives in a very detailed manner. He shows how difficult the job he does is. He describes his fears and hopes. In the last sentences he writes:

*The Gulf fills my heart with fear and anxiety. In the olden times, it was the source of generosity. Today I announce rebellion towards it. Yesterday, my best friend, who went out to sea never returned... I love you dear sea, but I fear that your beast will shallow me.*⁴¹³

In the story entitled *al-Kilāb (The Dogs)* he discusses the issue of man and his place in the modern world. The variation of the main characters' opinions towards the changes brought about by the present time is deepened. The economic development causes mixed feelings in different generations of the Emirates. The main character is a man, whose father dies and leaves him a huge estate. He was generous and fair towards the residents of the village, towards whom he had not only economic, but also emotional ties. After his father's death, the son isolated himself from the residents on a high mountain, where he built his palace. He started to treat people poorly: he forbade them to use the river and the land that was adjacent to the new palace. Dogs were set loose immediately on anyone who came close. He finally met God's punishment:

⁴¹⁰ Ibrāhīm Mubārak, *Shitā'*, in: *aṭ-Ṭaḥlub*, ash- Shāriqa 1989, p. 21.

⁴¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

⁴¹² *Ibidem*.

⁴¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

*The sky was full of clouds and a strong wind started to blow. Intense rain and hail fell like rocks to the ground. Everyone was overcome with fear. No one remembered such a night during which the wind blew away the homesteads. In the morning, everyone went outside to see their manors. The palace was ruined and surrounded by dead dogs.*⁴¹⁴

In the works of Ibrāhīm Mubārak we also observe involvement in the struggle for national independence. The collection ends with a patriotic story entitled *‘Ā’id ilā al-junūb* (*Returning to the South*) in which the author criticizes those who do not participate in the fighting in the south of the country. This may be a reference to the Palestinian cause, where Lebanon to the south may be the symbol:

*People are not like they used to be. Most of them think only of themselves. No one lifts a finger even when the homeland is burning. They do not want to defend their country. They only recite poetry [...] they speak and announce mottos [...] they curse the bad times. I felt my head hurt. I taste bitterness in my mouth. – I will go back to the south...*⁴¹⁵

This story stems from a feeling of hopelessness and bitterness, the source of which was the surrounding reality.

Most obviously the numerous trips around the world have resulted in impressive stories of foreign countries, their nature, monuments and culture in the collection entitled *‘Uṣfūr ath-thalj* (*The Snowy Sparrow*). In the title story, the fascination with Russia is very noticeable. The author is very impressed with the beauty of the nature: the thick forests, various types of birds and the white nights:

The city is in a deep sleep. Just as are your dreams. Only this snowy, green bird makes noise... he sits in your memory. And when you fall asleep, the snowy and fiery sparrows sing.

– *This is Red Square.*

– *This is the Russia Hotel... its Western Gate.*⁴¹⁶

The story entitled *Shajarat aṣ-Ṣanaūbar* (*The Pine Tree*) constitutes a reference to a different journey to North Korea, in the midst of socialism. The narrator travels with native Korean women, in the company of whom he feels comfortable to read them his works. One of them even becomes interested in the works of Gibrān Khalīl. When he remembers these events after he returns home, the girl is in prison:

*The days pass. Everything is like the wind. Only several beautiful pictures and some last names are remembered: Kim On and Waym Suk Yonk. Today I felt sadness and pain. That wonderful girl Suk Yonk will be in prison for ten years.*⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ Ibrāhīm Mubārak, *al-Kilāb*, in: *aṭ-Taḥlub*, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

⁴¹⁵ Ibrāhīm Mubārak, *‘Ā’id ilā al-junūb*, in: *aṭ-Taḥlub*, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

⁴¹⁶ Ibrāhīm Mubārak, *‘Uṣfūr ath-thalj*, in: *‘Uṣfūr al-thalj*, ash-Shāriqa 1992, p. 63.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

The narrator realizes how long a time this is. How much sadness and happiness will pass her by, for how many feastdays will she be missing from the table. The Korean pine tree is the symbol of the holidays. In remembering her journey and the girl, he is happy that he is safe at home, in the land which he loves:

*We also have our own tree in the desert, which we are proud of. Its so beautiful – the palm... It is the woman of the desert. Here the men have two loved ones: a woman and a palm tree.*⁴¹⁸

The topic of immigrants is not new to the literature of the Gulf. Ibrāhīm Mubārak presents this problem in his own manner in the story entitled *Khān. Sharāsa al-jabal. Salām al-baḥr* (Khan. The Mountain of Agitation and the Sea of Serenity) from the *Khān* (Khan) collection. The author showed the incessant fear that accompanies all those who try to enter the Arab Emirates illegally. The nervous atmosphere is transferred onto the structure of the text, in which short sentences reminiscent of military commands prevail:

*He said when the boat gets close to the coast, we should jump off quickly, disperse into all directions and hide wherever possible [...]. Bolting one after the other, and in the morning, jump into the passing cars.*⁴¹⁹

The main characters start to resemble game fleeing from the hunt that ultimately falls into a trap: *The boat barely touched the sandy coast, and our feet touched the ground when guns shots were fired in the direction of the captain and the police surrounded the boat.*⁴²⁰ Just two of them managed to escape; however, when they are caught, the punishment is even more severe:

*The beaten one was treated differently than the rest, who spent a month in prison. After this, they all returned to their native countries, while Aslam Khān wasted the next three years of his life in jail.*⁴²¹

The characters are united in their desire to escape, however in moments of threat, each one looks after their own survival.

The main character of the story is also an old man, who is trying to find his place in the new, changed world. Nothing was as it was before in him. During the taxi ride from Abu Dhabi to Dubai his thoughts go back to the times when he travelled this road on camel. In observing the changing world, he cannot deny the feeling that everything that once had some value in his life now belongs to the past:

*Everything that was important in his life has already gone. Voices no longer remain, just the howling of the waves playing with the beach, the seagulls singing above the sea, the hymn of the sailors who are sailing on their small boats...*⁴²²

⁴¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

⁴¹⁹ Ibrāhīm Mubārak, *Khān. Sharāsa al-jabal. Salām al-baḥr*, in: *Khān*, ash-Shāriqa 1999, p. 65.

⁴²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

⁴²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 68.

⁴²² *Ibidem*, p. 71.

The author clearly draws attention to the fact that man, towards the end of his life, values things that are totally different than those which seem to be significant for younger people. He searches for peace in nature and its harmony. He is able to carry his *bundle* which hides wealth, with honour, reconciled with suffering and pain, which occupied his entire life:

*When you get support from the mountain, you feel that you are strong as rock. I don't like sand for its looseness. The light breeze can change everything and provide a new shape. A man of the desert is a sympathetic man. His situation changes as the moving dunes. I selected the city of al-Ayn, specifically the Ḥafīt mountain to feel the strength.*⁴²³

Wisdom, which cannot be found in young people, trying to deal with their lives and their own emotions of being escapees, starts flowing from the main character. Looking from the life perspective, he is able to flawlessly assess where hope should be placed and where support should be looked for.

In the story entitled *Khān. Sharāsa al-jabal. Salām al-baḥr* (Khan. The Mountain of Agitation and the Sea of Serenity) Ibrāhīm Mubārak shows the fate of those who will be experiencing their rise and falls in the upcoming years. The main character here is not a man in his passing fate, but a community, which will last for eternity. And it is this skill of the community approach to society that goes hand in hand with the individual perspective of the main character. The richness of the characters, the accuracy and subtlety of the psychological sketch belong to the basic values of the stories of Ibrāhīm Mubārak.

Su'ād al-'Arīmī⁴²⁴ presents herself as a person of a unique sensitivity, a sharpened sense of observation and the skill of making reflections of a psychological and philosophical nature. The author of *Ra's dhī Yazan* (Ra's of Yazan [the name of the King of Yemen]) forces the leader to make an effort in taking on board the context on the essence of humanity.

Many stories in the collection describe the specific personalities of the main characters and presents their life experience. The narration first and foremost fulfils a cognitive role within them. And so in the story entitled *Til Abīb Kāfīh* (The Tel Aviv Cafe) we learn the story of Zuhayra from Morocco, who wins a green card to the United States. After coming to a foreign land, she has only three nights guaranteed in a hotel. Then she must count only on herself. Money received from her family and friends is spent quickly. She then meets Munīr the Jew, who is the manager of the title cafe, Tel Aviv. He offers her a job as a bartender. Ultimately, Zuhayra works there as a belly dancer, making the guests' stay enjoyable. However, her body was found in a gym room on 9 November 2001. The event took place two months after the attack of 11 September 2001: *The case*

⁴²³ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

⁴²⁴ See: Biographies of Writers.

*was closed as the perpetrator was never found and her body was buried in the presence of the police.*⁴²⁵

This story has a deep message. It may be assumed that in his own weakness man may prove to be his greatest threat. The main character was very proud of the possibility of leaving; she was looking for a better future. However, being an immigrant is not easy, especially if one comes from Arab countries. The prevalent stereotypes condemn the immigrant to loneliness and to alienation. In this story Su'ād al-'Arīmī enters the fight on a different perception of the Arab world.

However, the problem of immigration touches all those who decide to leave their homelands. The story entitled *Kull al-mawāsim* (*All the Seasons*) talks about the illegal Mexican immigrants coming to the United States. Their path to freedom and a good life is not any easier. The need to cross the border illegally, combating nature and their own weaknesses. Not everyone makes it to their paradise. The main character Carlos is one of the lucky ones. He gets a job in agriculture in San Diego. He is happy for every dollar he is able to save. However, when the season ends he decides to stay and find a job in a different sector. Since the job offers were not satisfactory, he decided to return to his family. Unfortunately, on the way he is stopped and deported:

*I saved five hundred dollars, but they took it from me as the fee for the bus that was to deport me. He returned with a plastic bag, in which there was a dress for his six-year-old daughter and red shoes for Marwa.*⁴²⁶

The story is tragic. It shows a main character who comes illegally to the place he has always dreamed of – America – the land of financial opportunity thanks to which he will be able to ensure a good life for his family. For the good of those closest to him, he agrees to the fate of someone condemned to the hardest labour, which in the end turns out to be in vain.

Immigration for educational purposes is shown in the story entitled *Ibtisāma min Zimbābuwī* (*A Smile from Zimbabwe*), in which the main character receives an academic scholarship to the United States to study dentistry. She cannot believe in her own luck and she promises that once she makes it to America she will walk from the Congress building to the White House on her knees. After arriving, she is enchanted by her new country. The nature surrounding her makes a great impression on her: the view of the snow and abundant greenery. Despite the winter, she decides to fulfil her promise, which she pays for with her life:

*Dora's picture hung at all the bus stops, shop windows and the leading newspapers: She was found frozen in the region of the government triangle, between the Congress building and the White House.*⁴²⁷

In the presented stories Su'ād al-'Arīmī wanted to paint the portrait of persons from various countries and to present their life experiences during their stay in the United States of America. We learn about them, we know what they thought and felt. The main

⁴²⁵ Su'ād al-'Arīmī, *Til Abīb Kāfīh*, in: *Ra's dhī Yazan*, ash-Shāriqa 2008, pp. 23–24.

⁴²⁶ Su'ād al-'Arīmī, *Kull al-mawāsim*, in: *Ra's dhī Yazan*, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

⁴²⁷ Su'ād al-'Arīmī, *Ibtisāma min Zimbābuwī*, in: *Ra's dhī Yazan*, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

motive of the actions of the main characters is the will to obtain wealth and education and thus a social position ensuring the recognition and respect of the surroundings.

The next story entitled *Tāj as-sammān* (Nickname) was dedicated to an outstanding writer Ṭayyīb Ṣāliḥ and refers to his controversial story entitled *Mawsim al-hijra ilā ash-shimāl* (The Season of Migration to the North). The main character is a man by the name of Tāj as-Sirr. However, everyone calls him Tāj as-sammān, which is the name of a bird. This comes from his interest in birds, which he observed on a daily basis in the place where the White and Blue Nile meet in Barzakh al-Miqrān near Khartoum. Informed about the said, his father beats him and does not allow him to take such trips. The boy moves in with his uncle, who allows him to develop his interests. After several years, he graduates from biological studies at university and became a specialist on birds. When the migration season was approaching, he would observe his beloved birds. After many years, the father understands his error and begins to treat his son with respect. Finally, the son leaves to finish his doctoral studies in his specialization in birds in America. There, he is recognized immediately as an outstanding specialist. His research on birds and humans causes certain reservations: *He does what Allāh has forbidden*.⁴²⁸ This time, however, the father along with the family stands by his son, as they understood what an outstanding specialist he is. Contact with him ends abruptly, until the day when the family learns that he has been imprisoned:

*The mother and father observed the birds of as-sammān as they move their wings, preparing for the migration season to the north. While the sun was setting, someone knocked at the door and informed them that their son Tāj as-Sirr is imprisoned in Guantanamo.*⁴²⁹

The constructional axis of the story is the history of an ageing boy, and then a man, who was most probably deemed a terrorist. On just a few pages we observe a confrontation of opinions with the family, accusations and the defence of one's own ideals. His fate is not typical and rather complicated, which is emphasized by the complexity of the character. As a young man – an academic, he is not able to understand and deal with the things taking place around him.

In the collection, there is no lack of charges made towards Americans for supporting Israel against the Palestinians. This is best shown in the story entitled *Rafaḥ* [a name and also the name of a city in the Gaza Strip in Palestine]. Rafaḥ is the symbol of a Palestinian woman. She participates actively in demonstrations in Washington at the Israeli Embassy by yelling; *You American soldiers! You should be ashamed of yourselves for protecting Zionists!*⁴³⁰

Rafaḥ tries to explain the situation of her homeland and the Palestinians to her American friends, however no one is interested. Through the words of Su'ād al-'Arīmī a conclusion is made that Americans succumb to the propaganda of the media and do not want to learn the truth on their own:

⁴²⁸ Su'ād al-'Arīmī, *Tāj as-sammān*, in: *Ra's dhī Yazan*, op.cit., p. 83.

⁴²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 94.

⁴³⁰ Su'ād al-'Arīmī, *Rafaḥ*, in: *Ra's dhī Yazan*, op.cit., p. 106.

*The image of Rafaḥ is the image of a Palestinian woman. She has a husband or a son, who were killed in Palestine. And a home that was destroyed. And land that was taken over. And dreams that were taken away.*⁴³¹

The stories of Su'ād al-'Arīmī were born from a feeling of helplessness and bitterness, the source of which is the surrounding reality. The author treats the facts and reality instrumentally. They are the signs of the reasoning she cites in order to justify the approach towards reality. al-'Arīmī's thoughts are serious, sad sometimes bitter. Expressed in a concise and conservative manner, they are reflections on the human condition. They constitute a literary document of the times in which she lives.

In the collection of short stories entitled *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha* (*Empty Beaches*), **Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī**,⁴³² with a substantial dose of criticism, outlines realistic images from the life of the Arab society. She confronts the fundamental issues of human existence such as love, youth, and old age.

The short stories entitled *al-Jarthūma* (*The Virus*) and *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha* (*Empty Beaches*) are tales of the Arabs' infatuation and fascination with women from Europe or America eventually leading to marriage. The main character of the first story abandons his Arab childhood fiancée to meet an American during his studies in America and set up home with her. Their love bears fruit – two daughters who, when they have grown up a bit, the main character wants to take to his homeland. Her mother refuses to grant her consent to this:

*Do you think that I want to leave for the country of prohibitions? You can go there yourself, if you please, for me and my daughters there's enough space in America.*⁴³³

Finally, the main character returns to his homeland on his own, going back to his children in his thoughts. One day, when his brother is getting ready to wed an Arab girl, he also starts to ponder marriage in his own country:

*His mother said: I will choose a girl from your own country for you, a girl to make you forget all your worries. She will banish your grief and your loneliness. I listened to her and left the matter to fate.*⁴³⁴

The main character is well aware that the emotional bonds with his American wife were based on their mutual fascination, ideas, and projections of their own expectations which in the end turned out to have been nothing but falsehood. The author displays a tendency to take characters in psychological categories, i.e. the unidentifiability of a human being whose personality is constantly changeable, escaping the grasp of ideas or definitions.

⁴³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

⁴³² See: Biographies of Writers.

⁴³³ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *al-Jarthūma*, in: *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha*, Dubayy 2000, p. 16.

⁴³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

Also the second story entitled *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha* (*Empty Beaches*) is similar in its content. This time, the main character named Shamsa (*Little Sun*) waits for her cousin who upon his return from Great Britain is to wed her. She experiences recurring fears that she will be left alone:

*She is facing spinsterhood, but she is still waiting for her cousin. She's been attached to him since her childhood, when her parents planted the love for him in her heart. After all, she belongs to him and she must pay the price of waiting.*⁴³⁵

For all these years, the main character has lived on hope for their future together and when one day she receives news of his arrival, with her heart in her boots, she sets off to the airport where her life is shattered:

*Her eyes follow the arrivals. She's noticed him from a distance. She wanted to throw herself in his arms, but her shame of the people prevented her from doing so. Şulṭān and his father embraced. Shamsa extended her hand to him while he addressed her in these words: Pardon me, I have forgotten to introduce my wife and my son Khālīd to you.*⁴³⁶

The authenticity of this morality pageant is beyond any doubt. A feeling born one day, if it existed at all, was based on appearances. Yet again, we come across criticism of relationships forced and arranged by families in childhood, in the adult life resulting in the violation of the partners' freedom of choice. Even if such a relationship does take place, it does not always have a happy ending as the story entitled '*Andamā yamūt al-farah* (*When the Joy Dies*)' proves. The story presents the woman's dreams of love concealing complexes following on from previous rejection. The main character discovers that in secret her husband has married another woman. Initially hurt and humiliated, she decides to leave her husband, but her family convinces her to make the sacrifice for her children's sake. Finally, the main character comes to terms with her fate, but her life is filled with grief and lack of faith in another human being:

*So I have come back. Since that day, I have lived only for my children. Green grass withered in my heart. My clothes gather dust. I live while my wounds grow bigger with each day. The joy in my eyes has died. I pay no attention to my husband and I feel nothing for him anymore.*⁴³⁷

The short story with the title *Maryam* [the main character's name] deals with a similar theme. The main character is an only child. Just like her mother, she was given into marriage to a man who mistreated her. He had been chosen by her father because of his wealth. He did not want to hear about a marriage with the cousin whom the daughter loved. After years of humiliation, he decided to marry for a second time. The main character tried for divorce many times, always in vain. Finally, despite her fears of social disapproval, the girl regains her freedom. Her mother offers her consolation:

⁴³⁵ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha*, in: *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha*, op.cit., p. 20.

⁴³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 25–26.

⁴³⁷ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, '*Andamā yamūt al-farah*', in: *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha*, op.cit., p. 44.

*Don't be afraid, my daughter [...] don't be afraid. People will talk no more tomorrow. They will go back to their own business and they will find other fairy tales to keep them busy.*⁴³⁸

Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī penetrates the personalities of her main characters and analyses spouses' behaviour. Not only does the narrator know what the main characters feel and think, but also where their relationship to the family and their surrounding world comes from. The psychological analysis of the main characters makes up the mosaic of characters and attitudes constituting the basis for these collective portraits of Arab society.

Dahshat al-maṭārāt (*Surprised with Airports*) is one of Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī's most innovative and interesting stories. The author presents how Americans perceive the people of the Persian Gulf region. Stereotypes of the affluence of the sheikhs prevail: *They all think that everybody in the Gulf region has an oil well next to their houses.*⁴³⁹ Yet another stereotype is the image of a man who treats his wife with contempt and disregard. The story at the airport serves this very purpose. An Arab, under the guise of a picnic trip, abducts his children. A woman who witnesses the incident expresses her grief and sympathises with the mother:

*The word 'grief' is unable to express the pain I experienced when he told me what had happened. What is his poor wife going through now? How will she bear the parting from her kids? What sort of marriage is that? What catastrophe? When my husband came, I was wiping away the tears trickling down my face.*⁴⁴⁰

In Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī's short stories it is the environment that defines the individual, decides the direction for their development and the hierarchy of their values. Her main characters are both individuals while simultaneously being typical representatives of various environments. In most of the stories, the fundamental ethical principles, feelings, and dignity are not of importance. There is no room for sentiment, sensitivity, nobleness, and honour. They are just a communication of truth about contemporary Emirate society.

The title of the collection of short stories of Ḥārīb az-Zāhirī,⁴⁴¹ *Layl ad-dumā* (*The Night of Dolls*) refers to the motive of the *mundi theatre*, representing the concept attributed to Plato. According to this theory, the world is created by a higher being who fulfils the role of a director. People are puppets. This topic is often present in literature, being propagated by William Shakespeare in his comedy *As you like it*, which includes the following quote: *All the world's a stage, All the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances.*

Hadhā al-yawm (*This Day*) constitutes a psychological study of the feelings of the main character, his feeling of being lost and loneliness. He describes his state of anxi-

⁴³⁸ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Maryam*, in: *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha*, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

⁴³⁹ Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī, *Dahshat al-maṭārāt*, in: *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fārigha*, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

⁴⁴¹ See: Biographies of Writers.

ety before the title *This Day: I did not wake up, but I also did not sleep*.⁴⁴² He wanders in the streets of an Arab city, where he meets average persons *full of life, falsity and the truth*.⁴⁴³ He asks passers-by a question on the topic of *this day*, but no one gives him an answer. In observing the main character, we clearly perceive his feeling of being lost in the world. He falls into a reflection on the time that is passing. He reaches for ancient philosophy defining time as the aspect of an uprising, duration, change and passing. He feels lost. He buys a newspaper with his last bit of change, which he does not know what to do with. So he asks himself:

*What are these newspapers? Without any titles and dates, they bear information which has tired me. I have read them about a thousand times.*⁴⁴⁴

He comes to the conclusion that he will probably not learn about what this day is. He decides to deal with his own physiological needs, as he feels extreme hunger. In the end he comes to the conclusion that this day is one of many ordinary days. Only the silence of the street and hunger accompany the main character in his loneliness. The thunder storm is the culminating point. Perhaps this fulfils the role of cleansing, which allows one to be taken out of the state of anxiety and anticipation. The sun which appears seems to enlighten the mind of the main character, as he comes to the conclusion that *this day* is as any other day.

The story entitled *Hadhā al-yawm (This Day)* is the search for and the development of knowledge about man, his personality – the natural and cultural conditions. The author strives towards a philosophical reflection, and he also searches for confirmation in everyday life.

The main character of the story entitled *Ḥāfa al-ḥayāt (The Dregs of Life)* this time is a degraded man, thrown out onto the streets, one forced to beg. He seems to be suspended in time, which the passers-by walk along the street and throw coins his way without any feeling. He sits in corners and reminisces about the good times when he was the owner of a shop and when he met his first love.

This is a man devoid of hope, as he has lost everything – his shop and his beloved woman. He cannot accept the current situation, *he would like to feel the scent of the journey and relax, wear spiritual treasures made of gold, meet women and kindle their hearts*.⁴⁴⁵ He would like to go back to the time of his splendour, the moments of pleasure they experienced as *The coins falling from the hands of the passers-by provoke thoughts about bottles of wine and cans of beer that lead his mind to these pleasures*.⁴⁴⁶

Even though he is not spoiled by life, he seems to be, in all his helplessness, used to the worst conditions of living on the street:

*he is living under the care of the biting cold and the rain with a cold heart, hidden in the dark corners, in embroidered rags, under the naked sky.*⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴² Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Hadhā al-yawm*, in: *Layl ad-dumā*, ash-Shāriqa 2005, p. 64.

⁴⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴⁵ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Ḥāfa al-ḥayāt*, in: *Layl ad-dumā*, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

He is sad and helpless, he sees no light at the end of the tunnel.

In the past he fell in love with a woman, however after some time, she seemed interested only in material things. She systematically introduced *a new order* into the shop and the home: *She would turn her back on him every time he asked her for something.*⁴⁴⁸ Here we see a motif often touched upon in both contemporary and classic Arab literature, namely identifying women with a destructive force and evil. In *The Garden of Pleasure* Sheikh an-Nafzāwī repeated: *How many husbands subjected themselves to inevitable doom, just to lie at her door?*⁴⁴⁹

The woman's domination tired the main character so much that he protested against such a manner of life and *poverty offered him a place to stay with it.*⁴⁵⁰ Despite his helplessness he could not go back, as he decided that no one was going to dominate him, which is emphasized by the last sentence of the story. *You don't have to wear the shoes that someone puts on you.*⁴⁵¹ In the end, the main character is lost anyway. He is experiencing a conflict of values, as on the one hand, he wants to be an independent person, while on the other, in accepting donations, he is totally dependent on others.

Ḥārib az-Zāhirī uses a reporting, almost naturalistic description of the main character as a gaunt, battered and pale beggar. Extreme poverty on the Arab streets is confronted with the images of richness and splendour: gold bracelets, power, wine. The story is a psychological study of a degraded man, who found himself in the dregs of life of the title. The author examines various aspects of his life, showing the complicated reality which we all live in.

A similar problem is presented in the story entitled *al-Hufra (The Hole)*. The author analyzes an accident that the operator of a excavator has experienced. He fell into a hole, which here becomes the metaphor of life. This work is simply about an ordinary man, overwhelmed by everyday family and financial problems. Despite the differences in fate, he wants to go forward, step by step, to ensure a better life for his family.

In his stories Ḥārib az-Zāhirī wants to track the problem of the identity of his main characters. It turns out that man is a rather complicated being; to describe him, to explicitly assess him within categories of good and evil, he employs in several works a synthesis of contradictory traits, ones battling each other for domination.

The misfortunes, happiness, passions and habits of the ordinary residents have been presented in the collection of short stories entitled *Wajh armala fātina (The Face of a Beautiful Widow)* by **Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī**.⁴⁵² The author is actively involved in the matters of the afflicted, whose fate is presented in the story entitled *Wilāda jasad (The Birth of a Body)*. The main character is a poor newspaper salesman. In the heat, he traverses the streets to obtain money to feed his family. He observes the rich men exiting the restaurants or driving comfortable cars:

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

⁴⁴⁹ Sheikh An-Nafzawī, *Ogród rozkoszy* (transl. I. Lisowicz), Warszawa 2006, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁰ Ḥārib az-Zāhirī, *Ḥāfa al-hayāt*, in: *Layl ad-dumā*, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵² See: Biographies of Writers.

*He left the restaurant with a large bag full of sandwiches. He was looking at this mass of fat with a negative eye and said: What scoundrels with their stuffed bellies. He remembered that he had not yet eaten anything, and he could only afford to buy one loaf of bread from the newspapers he sold. Bread that only the poor eat.*⁴⁵³

The poorest want to escape this poverty and improve their life. They meet deprivation and social unfairness every step of the way. They no longer want to live in acute poverty:

*The entire housing project is immersed in faeces. Small children and women carry water in buckets with rusted plates. Cockroaches and mice hide in the holes and corners.*⁴⁵⁴

The author undertakes an examination of the uniquely significant problem of those who do not fall into poverty out of their own free will. They want to rise up and take up honest work, despite this it is difficult for them to gain respect in a society oriented on material goods. They are helpless and hopeless and cheated as a result. Even though money does not bring happiness, they are required to get through each day.

The topic of the poor, those condemned to a barren and difficult existence, is taken up in the next story entitled *Bayt ad-dumā* (*The Doll's House*). The author focuses on the comparison of the rich and poor on the example of children coming from families of mixed material status. Despite poverty 'Abīr and Dunyā experience the everyday love and care of their loving parents. The father works hard to ensure their basic existence. The daughters reciprocate with love and respect. When they are invited one day to Sāra's birthday party, they cannot get over the toys their rich friend has. Despite the fact that she treats them with disdain, she likes to impress them with expensive objects, such as the doll she received for her birthday, that walks on its own, speaks and sings: *Sāra stood in front of her friends and said in a commanding tone: I will show you the present my father bought me.*⁴⁵⁵

Although the girls are poor they have their pride and they regret coming to Sāra's birthday party. They prefer staying at home, where they feel loved. In the portraits of the representatives of the "have" class Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī emphasize egoism, the cult of appearance and money. She contradicted this with sacrifice and the love of those touched by ill fate.

The story entitled *Qalb dāfī' mithla qalbī* (*A Heart as Warm as Mine*) included abundant information on the created world presented. The main character learns about the date of her death from her doctor. Until the date of her death, i.e. 27 June, she remembers and recalls various moments from her life. Hence, the magnitude of the tragedy she experienced when she lost her child just after birth, and right after, the loss of her husband, who, on learning about the death of his newborn child, caused a car accident. After these dramatic events, she locks herself in her house and garden. al-Mazrū'ī paints the portrait of an unhappy person, one excluded, someone who is disappointed with and frightened by the world. She is not able to find her place in among people, for this reason, she es-

⁴⁵³ Fāṭima al- al-Mazrū'ī, *Wilāda jasad*, in: *Wajh armala fātina*, Abū Ḥabī 2009, p. 101.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

⁴⁵⁵ Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī, *Bayt ad-dumā*, in: *Wajh armala fātina*, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

capacities into solitude. This then brings us to a state of breakdown and depression. Accepting her fate, she waits for the foretelling of her death. You can imagine her surprise when on 27 June, several minutes past midnight she learns that her maid has been murdered by a thief, who had broken into her house to steal her jewellery.

*It is strange that I was waiting for death in my room when death was in another, where the maid was attacked. I returned to my garden to contemplate the blooming plants. We wait for death, and it passes us right by.*⁴⁵⁶

The main character is overcome with despair. She is unable to cope with the misfortunes that have come upon her. The feeling of despair is deepened by the awareness of the fragility of human life as well as the fact that suffering does not only touch her, but also others. Her thoughts return to the death of someone else. The story includes the motif of life shown as a lonely wanderer, who is always accompanied by partings, loneliness, death and a feeling of emptiness.

The main character of the story entitled '*Andamā yā 'tī al-masā*' (*When the Evening Comes*) recalls with tenderness images remembered from childhood. As a twelve-year-old boy, he observed a man sitting on the bench and reading a newspaper. He was engrossed in the information, not knowing what was going on around him. The main character had always wanted to meet him and talk to him, however when his father learned about this, his father forbade him sternly from doing so. Everyone thought the old man was rather strange: *I was twelve-years old and I really wanted to get close to him, become his friend, take a close look at him.*⁴⁵⁷

After years of living away from his family home and having graduated from university, he returns. Unfortunately, he does not find the stranger. He is saddened by the situation. He decides to follow in the footsteps of the man, who he was never able to come to know.

*The bench was empty. I asked about him. People said that they had not seen him for a long time. Some even doubted he had ever existed. I felt that his bench was calling me. When evening came, I brought a stack of newspapers, which I had bought from an older seller in the used book shop and I started reading them carefully.*⁴⁵⁸

In this situation, people started perceiving the boy as also being strange; who, for some unknown reason, is mimicking the predecessor. The main character observes a small boy in the distance, who is staring at him in the same way in which he observed the older man. On the basis of this story, the author emphasizes that every history likes to repeat itself.

The title story entitled *Wajh armala fātina* (*The Face of a Beautiful Widow*) is the story of a beautiful widow and her two children. They live in a multi-family home. Unfortunately, the woman's beauty leads to jealousy on the part of the other female residents about their husbands, who could pay attention to the widow:

⁴⁵⁶ Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī, *Qalb dāfī* 'mithla qalbī, in: *Wajh armala fātina*, op.cit., p. 61.

⁴⁵⁷ Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī, '*Andamā yā 'tī al-masā*', in: *Wajh armala fātina*, op.cit., p. 11.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

*Many months had passed. Her presence in this house alarmed everyone, especially the women. In the depth of their souls they felt fear and they were afraid of her.*⁴⁵⁹

The mendacious neighbours begin thinking up various false stories on the topic of the woman, to belittle her in the eyes of others from the neighbourhood:

*The widow avoided leaving her house. When people came to the housing estate, they lashed out horrible words at her, which stung like a whip.*⁴⁶⁰

In the end the widow decides to leave her place of residence.

The reader has no doubts that Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī will humiliate the hypocrites. They have a very low opinion of themselves, which does not give them a feeling of security and they treat each person that appears as a threat.

Within the context of those topics touched upon by Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī in her first collection of works of 2003 *Laylat al-ʿīd* (The Holiday Evening), referring directly to the broadly understood topic of women, several rudimentary ways in which the issue is addressed may be noted. In the synthetic take, a mosaic is drawn before us, which is comprised of the various faces of the main Emirate characters. We therefore find the image of a woman as a victim, and then as a romantic lover and mother. In the end we see a contemporary independent woman, who goes outside the traditional model of attributed female traits.

The story entitled *Ahlām mulawwana* (Colourful Dreams) takes the form of the bitter childhood memories of a woman working at university. We feel a great deal of bitterness, a feeling of humiliation and unfairness in the work. All these feelings are all the more painful, as the main character experienced all this evil from the hand of those closest to her. The scene, in which the girl wants to boast of her school report at home, rises to the ranks of a symbol. It turns out that no one is interested. What is more, the angered father rips up the report, showing the child how little knowledge means in his eyes.

The woman as a literary figure also appears in the context of death, in the piece entitled *Najma ash-shimāl* (The Star of the North). Here, the woman – a mother, dies as a result of war. Her character takes on the form of a hero, she gives her life for her own family as well as for her country.

The collection of short stories of Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī brings with it an entire palette of varied female images. The short story entitled *Aṣāfir al-masā'* (The Evening Birds) is a painful and sad fragment from the life of a girl afflicted with illness. In bearing the attacks of the illness in great pain, she dreams of flying out of her closed existence like a bird and be happy with her freedom. In the work, the main character's dream is confronted with the bitter reality of everyday life, which passes in suffering and the wait for death.

In the end, the image of the woman, is the image of a mother. This is characterised mostly by love and care towards her own child. It is in her arms that the characters find a safe haven, as in the title story entitled *Laylat al-ʿīd* (The Holiday Evening). The mother also becomes the closest confident for cares and woes. At her side, the main characters find support, understanding and sometimes the best care.

⁴⁵⁹ Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī, *Wajh armala fātina*, in: *Wajh armala fātina*, op.cit., p. 88.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

In the story entitled *Laylat al- 'īd* (*The Holiday Evening*) Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī attempts to go beyond the static model of a woman incapacitated through the presentation of dynamic images of internal rebellion amongst the main characters and the challenges they face; challenges not only in relation to men, but also the prevalent customs. In the story entitled *Baqāyā taḥt at-turāb* (*Covered by Dust*) an oneiric vision, in which a mysterious person appears, one reminiscent of the main character's father, becomes the impetus to question the reasons for the current situation. Reflections over one's own situation and social status also become a question of the world of men and men themselves. The story *Ahlām mulawwana* (*Colourful Dreams*), in which the main character is able to break away from the hold of a mean and unfeeling father as well as blind tradition, brings somewhat more optimism. Realizing one's *own self* in the case of the characters created by Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī is the affirmation of a woman's right to work and to dignity.

The basic values in al-Mazrū'ī's works include the richness of the characters, accuracy and the subtlety of their psychological portraits.

Through his works from the collection *Ḥālāt min al-layl yaghshāhā an-nahār* (*Night Situations Mixed With Day Situations*), Nāṣir az-Zāhirī⁴⁶¹ appears to be a person of peculiar sensitivity, an acute sense of observation, and of the ability to engage in reflection that is philosophical in its nature. The writer in a peculiar manner emphasises the role of humanity and points to the most prominent distinguishing factors of this attitude. He chooses those fragments of their destiny that present reactions to difficult life situations. And therefore, the main characters of the three frames of *Thalāth ḥaqā'ib 'alā ar-raṣīf* (*Three Suitcases on the Pavement*), which are set in Bombay, are poor citizens of India. They are individual characters at the same time being typical representatives of various milieus. The hero of the first literary image is the title main character *Shanqar Bābū*. All his life, he has dreamt of owning a house. He reminisces on his childhood and the wooden family house. He remembers the wild flood waters that swept away his parents and his grandmother. Since the moment he lost his house and family, he has lived in the streets, earning his daily bread as a porter:

*Shanqar Bābū all the time carried the luggage of travellers. He could not and was unable to build a house nor to find somebody who could share with him the poverty, the hardness of life and the hardness of dreams. He lived working as a porter lugging other people's luggage [...] until he perished on the pavement and found no-one to lift him up.*⁴⁶²

The main character of the second picture is *Lakashmi* who gives birth to a child on the pavement of a railway station waiting for a Bombay-bound train. Carrying her bundle and the infant next to her chest, munching on a bit of dry bread, she meets her long-not-seen husband. He also lives on the poverty line. A meeting of the spouses takes place:

⁴⁶¹ See: Biographies of Writers.

⁴⁶² Nāṣir az-Zāhirī, *Thalāth ḥaqā'ib 'alā ar-raṣīf*, in: *Ḥālāt min al-layl yaghshāhā an-nahār*, al-Qāhira 2005, p. 44.

*She gave her newly-born infant to her husband. His face was radiant with a smile. She wanted to stay on her feet, but was unable to. She collapsed next to her bundle. The infant was screaming. Her husband continued to smile since he heard his baby cry for the first time.*⁴⁶³

The hero of the last in the series of three pictures is a state official Riyāḍ Bāy, retiring after many years of service. He is the son of a great patriot – a holder of many an award for his meritorious deeds for his homeland. Upon his demise, poverty-stricken Riyāḍ Bāy inherited all of his father's orders only to sell them for a handful of pennies to survive the next few days. After thirty years, he retires. On the last day of service, he receives a letter of congratulations with thanks for his service to the country. The hero departs empty-handed since he has never achieved anything. He knew neither how to wheel and deal nor how to cheat. He never took bribes. His colleagues knew better how to range themselves with their positions. Nonetheless, his integrity is appreciated and one day he finds out that he has been selected to serve on the local authorities:

*He received a telegram from the election committee in his town with an invitation to run in the local elections. He hesitated as usual. After long hours of deliberations, he agreed. He set the date to be picked up from the station... on the station's pavement he took two bullets: the black one – of hate, and the blind one – of envy.*⁴⁶⁴

In presenting the subsequent main characters of his short story, Nāṣir aḏ-Zāhirī selects those fragments of their fate that illustrate their reactions to varied, difficult, and dramatic conduct in the face of a threat to life itself. Oftentimes, these threats are humans proper who in their weakness, breakdown, lack of will to engage in active action turn out to be a threat to themselves. We watch manifestations of inequality and envy that threaten individuals who are poor and subordinated to others. The fate of these wretches and their abandoned families is nothing to be envied. Such a situation changes the psychology of defenceless, most often honest, and innocent people. Gradually they become wrecks and lose the sense of their own dignity. Without obtrusive didacticism, the author is able to speak of righteousness, responsibility, and human dignity.

Nāṣir aḏ-Zāhirī takes up the theme of a poor immigrant from India in another short story entitled *Jahānjir Khān* [the hero's name]. This time, the main character works in the town of al-Ayn. In spare moments, he stops by at a local hotel to watch the life of the affluent citizens of the Arab Emirates. From a distance, he admires the European women swimming in the pool. He dreams of leading the lifestyle they do. He feels the rising wish to have a woman, to rise above his squalor, and to improve his existence.

The human types presented by aḏ-Zāhirī in the above stories can be encountered in all the countries of the Persian Gulf. They remind one of the existence of areas of poverty and of a visible decline in moral values.

The discovery of oil has caused significant changes in the fabric of the traditional social structure. The values in force prior to the discovery of oil and the values of the new era are in conflict. And so, the hero of the story entitled *al-Uwayd* (A Twig) planted

⁴⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

a lotus tree under whose branchy boughs the inhabitants of his neighbourhood sought protection against the heat. The shade-giving tree also had the role of being a social meeting point. Under the pretence of escaping the heat, they would meet there, talk, play, and laugh. Years pass by and clay dwellings are being replaced with new houses, in their size and pomp corresponding to the society of the nouveau-riche. Their residents no longer leave their air-conditioned palaces. The mode of life is changing:

*al-‘Uwayd has grown lonely. Only the remnants of the giant tree have been left. The palms, next to the high-rise buildings are already hardly visible, too. And the square that used to be evergreen, bustling with human traffic and shouts, has become barren and the life in it has come to a halt. The lotus fruit is falling dried out tree is beginning to wither away.*⁴⁶⁵

As follows from the story, the former atmosphere of the life of the district is in atrophy. The residents, living in modern houses brimming with luxury no longer have time, and often no desire, to cultivate the former, traditional lifestyle. aẓ-Zāhirī’s story shows the fate of the lotus tree against the background of a society which is undergoing fundamental transformations and is forced to find its place within the new situation.

Special attention should be paid to the cycle of six pictures comprising the story entitled *Tafāṣīl Bārīsiya (Parisian Details)*. Most likely, these are the author’s impressions from his stay in Paris. And so, in the first literary picture entitled *Kāhin al-maḥaṭṭa (The Station Priest)*, we get to see a man seated on the steps of a station. In front of him, there is a vessel for alms from passers-by. Alas, those who would support him are not many. The author watches him: *He’s sitting, and there’s a mug by him, seldom brimming with the money from passers-by. In this great city, a man is humiliated struggling for a piece of bread.*⁴⁶⁶ Another vision, *Khaṭwāt fī aẓ-ẓalām (The Steps in the Darkness)*, spins a tale of the difficult fate of a blind man. Yet another, *ad-Dawr al-akhīr (The Last Floor)*, is a story of a man acting like a child. He spends all his days at McDonald’s and giving sweets to kids. Then he dozes away and when he wakes up, he returns to his flat on the last floor from where he watches the river:

*The lift stops at the thirtieth floor. The man-child gets out and takes a look. How he looks at the river and the deep gash in the head.*⁴⁶⁷

In the pictures that follow, the author bitterly describes the vastness of soulless Paris, where poor and disabled people live in indigence without perspectives for a normal future. People from social downs are depicted as a crowd – haggard and stripped of dignity, unable to act to defend their rights. Life in such conditions significantly impacts the mental and physical frame of the main characters.

Nāṣir aẓ-Zāhirī has won recognition with short stories that uncover the secrets of the human soul and the intricacies of the human psyche. The writer provides a take on the contemporary world in its entire complexity. The objective was to shape specific attitudes towards the main characters, to outline their profiles, to present their life experi-

⁴⁶⁵ Nāṣir aẓ-Zāhirī, *al-‘Uwayd*, in: *Ḥālāt min al-layl yaghshāhā an-nahār*, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

⁴⁶⁶ Nāṣir aẓ-Zāhirī, *Tafāṣīl Bārīsiya*, in: *Ḥālāt min al-layl yaghshāhā an-nahār*, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

ence. In his works, the narration first and foremost realises cognitive functions. Nāṣir's stories have grown out of a sense of helplessness and bitterness, with their source rooted in reality.

A focus on simple people and ordinary events – this is the most general characteristics of the collection of short stories *Ḍaw' yadhab li-l-nawm* (The Light Is Going To Sleep) by **Ibtisām al-Mu'allā**.⁴⁶⁸ The story entitled *Ḥidādān 'alā Adīsūn* (Mourning Edison) refers to the title of the entire collection. It portrays the story of an average family deprived of electricity. The situation serves the author in bringing one back to the times of yore when there was no electricity. Life passed completely differently. Everyone would stay together, talk, play games together, jog by the sea, and have fun. Nowadays, everyone locks themselves up in their own rooms with their PCs or TVs. The author's longing for the past is clear: the smell of baked bread, the aroma of spices at the bazaar, and conversations with people who are in no rush to get anywhere.

The next two stories: *Khayṭ ṭawīl wa naḥīl* (A Long Thin Thread) and *Amākin ḍayyiqa* (Tight Places) are an attempt at showing professional problems with a bearing on family life. The first of the stories is a portrait of a man ignored, whose wife is pursuing her career and work long hours, neglecting her family:

*He remembers the past weeks he spent with her as if with a stranger. He incessantly complains about her long hours in the editor's office and about her neglecting the home. She accused him, in front of their daughter, that he didn't appreciate her work, didn't read her articles, and was envious of her income.*⁴⁶⁹

Ibtisām al-Mu'allā takes on a subject extremely difficult for a woman – the subject of loneliness and alienation of a man neglected by his wife and treated by her as an outright stranger. At home, she talks only to their daughter and treats him as if thin air while at weekends watches films on DVD. The author has shown the woman as a person who has given up on creating a loving family and a warm home for the sake of her career. Perhaps, sensing the man's weakness, she strives to achieve a position that will furnish her with a sense of domination at home and at work. In turn, the only person left to the man is his mother:

*His mother always knew he wanted to talk. She would always hear him out. After all, she was a mother. She knows he's been bashful since his childhood and the thirty years spent with his wife he was just waiting for some sympathy.*⁴⁷⁰

The short story entitled *Amākin ḍayyiqa* (Tight Places) also concerns professionally tied-up spouses. Their work, nonetheless, does not bear well on their private life. They

⁴⁶⁸ See: Biographies of Writers.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibtisām al-Mu'allā, *Khayṭ ṭawīl wa naḥīl*, in: *Ḍaw' yadhab li-l-nawm*, Abū Zābī 2009, p. 28.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

constantly argue since the woman feels undervalued and unappreciated at work: *She was vexed by his questions and the way he addressed her using the word "Daughter"*.⁴⁷¹

The woman feels disappointed that her husband does not share the problems of his work with her and that he does not accept her work. The story shows an average day in the life of a married couple. The purpose and meaning within their life becomes watered down in the deluge of professional problems. The spouses are people whose time is spent on monotonous and unproductive activities. They are unaware of the vapidness of their own existence.

The next story, entitled *Lawn al-mā'* (*The Colour of Water*), is dedicated to the loneliness of a man who feels pain after the loss of his wife and after his daughter's wedding:

*There has been nothing to cause sadness, yet he is sad. It is a completely different type of sadness compared to the sadness he had experienced after his only daughter's wedding fifteen years before. That sadness then was different to the grief he experienced after his wife's demise several years ago and the spending of time at home alone.*⁴⁷²

Immersed in loneliness, the hero focuses all his attention and activity on review publications in magazines:

*He isn't lonely. He is merely sad. For eight years, looking in the mirror, he has kept repeating that sadness is a state that must pass.*⁴⁷³

The hero struggles against the sadness and monotony of his life by writing poetry. His interest in the world is superficial and devoid of value. After all, it is limited to reading merely the press. He notices only these fragments of reality which he can translate into the language of the notions and objects he is familiar with.

But Ibtisām al-Mu'allā's short stories depict not only men and their problems. The main character of the story entitled *Madhā sataf'alīna bī?* (*What Will You Do with Me?*) is a student living in incessant anxiety. This is a result of her fears about the rest of her life. She is lost and frustrated by the actions of her mother, who cares only about other people's opinions, but not that of her daughter's:

*Had you remarried, I wouldn't be a lonely only child now. You grew up in a house with many kids and you have never felt the void I feel now.*⁴⁷⁴

The short stories by Ibtisām al-Mu'allā are a culmination of his knowledge about humans and society. The dominant role of the narration is one personally oriented on concrete characters and constitutes the reflection of the processes of their arrival at a specific awareness, of the evolution of their ideas in direct contact with the matter of life.

⁴⁷¹ Ibtisām al-Mu'allā, *Amākin ḍayyīqa*, in: *Ḍaw' yadhab li-l-nawm*, op.cit., p. 67.

⁴⁷² Ibtisām al-Mu'allā, *Lawn al-mā'*, in: *Ḍaw' yadhab li-l-nawm*, op.cit., p. 104.

⁴⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibtisām al-Mu'allā, *Madhā sataf'alīna bī?*, in: *Ḍaw' yadhab li-l-nawm*, op.cit., p. 131.

The collection of short stories by **Rawḍa al-Balūshī**⁴⁷⁵ entitled *Bāṣ al-qiyāma* (The Bus of Resurrection) takes up various social and moral issues, such as the tragic fate of immigrants or the difficult situation of women. The author displays in them the difficult skill of selected observed material while at the same time achieving an objectivism in the accounts and a succinctness in expression. The works are free of any rhetoric and moralising without losing their sharpness in focus on difficult matters.

There are five passengers on the bus of the title. The main character does not know where she is to go and then the driver informs her that they are bound for hell. The entire vision of the world in this short story is surrealist. A bus driver is the main character of the next short story *Ḥafīf al-mir'a* (*The Rustle of the Mirror*). Fayrūz Khān is a citizen of Pakistan and each day he takes girls to school. Each day he watches the new faces in the mirror. From the girls, he is exposed to ridicule and derision. They treat him as a worse category citizen only because he is poor. Despite the insults and abuse, he remains calm and represses the sadness and embitterment he feels inside. He cannot afford to lose his job. The money he earns allows his family to survive. He is aware that everywhere in the world poor and uneducated people are mistreated and held in contempt. It is by no means better in his own country. Lack of possibilities, suffering, and strife are their daily bread:

*The mirror draws him into other times: the faces of brothers, images of his homeland appear before his eyes... His father's face fades in a tribal battle. As does the smell of the clay family house which he carries inside him. Cold nights and black days.*⁴⁷⁶

The hero finds the sense of isolation and humiliation difficult to accept. However, he is reconciled to it, understanding the need for work and the obligation to his own family.

In the next story entitled *Mithl shāt marīḍa taqīfīna* (*You Are Standing Like a Sick Sheep*) the writer seems to be deeply involved in the matter in hand. She can penetrate the thoughts and feelings of her main character – a young girl with abdominal pains. Upon examination, the physician tells her she is pregnant. The diagnosis turns out to be a curse for the entire family since the girl is unmarried. She is imprisoned at home, subjected to torture and beating. She defends herself and begs for mercy, swearing that she is a virgin. Her family, however, do not believe her entreaties. Only after several days does it turn out that it was a mistake: *An accursed nurse is the cause of it all. She made a mistake while ordering the test results and put those of another patient into her file.*⁴⁷⁷

Not for the first time does a short story show women being treated like objects. Incapacitated by her families, only with difficulty were they able to follow what was going on with their own lives. Their drama is a result of individual entanglement in the struggle with the dogmatism of traditional value systems embedded in Arab society.

The incapacitation of the main character constitutes the subject of the story entitled *Ḥikāyat Ibrāhīm* (*Ibrāhīm's Tale*). Ibrahim is a man put in fetters by his mother, who is afraid to lose her son. The woman fears that when she frees him, he will abandon her the way his father, who left and married another woman in town, did. Ibrāhīm is the

⁴⁷⁵ See: Biographies of Writers.

⁴⁷⁶ Rawḍa al-Balūshī, *Ḥafīf al-mir'a*, in: *Bāṣ al-qiyāma*, Abū Zabī 2009, p. 18.

⁴⁷⁷ Rawḍa al-Balūshī, *Mithl shāt marīḍa taqīfīna*, in: *Bāṣ al-qiyāma*, op.cit., p. 41.

laughingstock for the entire village, the inhabitants of which afford him cruel treatment. However, one day he manages to break the odious chains and escape:

*You can see they cannot catch up with him. They are all running – young and old alike. But Ibrāhīm is gaining distance ever more quickly. You can see he's happy. The pursuers are tiring and find it difficult to catch breath. Ibrāhīm laughs out loudly. This sight triggered surprise on our faces while Ibrāhīm kept disappearing from our sight.*⁴⁷⁸

Manacled Ibrāhīm's house is his prison, which limits him, destroys his individuality, and condemns him to loneliness. This dreadful emptiness and never ending scorn means that he stops seeing the sense of life. His escape and regaining of freedom will surely allow him to start a new life. It seems that the story sprouted from a sense of helplessness and embitterment, with their sources in the reality that surrounds a human. We all, to a greater or smaller degree, are constrained by manacles.

Sensitivity to human distress within an individual and collective dimension, the internal unacceptance for the existing and widely approved system allowed Rawḍa al-Balūshī to preserve his freshness of moral judgment, independence of opinion, and objectivism in his perception of the world. In the writer's understanding, man is simultaneously an individual and a part of a community. Both these functions merge and supplement each other. However, al-Balūshī recognises man's social sphere to be more important. According to her, everybody is defined only by their own attitude to other people, their relationship to the society they belong to.

⁴⁷⁸ Rawḍa al-Balūshī, *Hikāyat Ibrāhīm*, in: *Bāṣ al-qiyyāma*, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

Part Three

Theatre in the United Arab Emirates

Ḥabīb Ghulūm al-‘Aṭṭār in the introduction to the book *The Development of Theatrical Activity in the Gulf Region* wrote that theatre occupied an important place within the societies of the countries of the Gulf. At present theatre in these countries has been equipped with advanced technological equipment which has enabled those connected with it to follow the very latest achievements in the field of the performing arts. Besides the Higher Institute of Theatre Arts in Kuwait there has been opened a theatre faculty at the Sulṭān Qābūs University in Oman as well as at two Saudi universities: the King Sa‘ūd University and the Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa‘ūd University. Finally in 1999 the Theatre Institute was founded in ash-Shāriqa.⁴⁷⁹

The development of theatre in the countries of the Gulf has been connected with the development of schooling. And so the first production entitled *al-Qādī bi-amr Illāh* (*A Judge from God's Will*) took place in al-Muḥarraḡ in Bahrain 1925 on the boards of the al-Hadāya al-Khalīfiyya school.⁴⁸⁰

Equally in the Emirates the first theatre productions took place in schools, for example in the al-Qassimiyya school in ash-Shāriqa. For Emirate schools and those teaching within them were to produce the actors and dramatists of subsequent years. Further development of theatre was to take place in sports clubs: Nādī al-‘Umānī i Nādī ash-Sha‘b wa al-‘Urūba in Shariqa, Nādī ash-Shurṭa and Nādī al-Ahlī ar-Riyāḡī in Abu Dhabi, Nādī ash-Shabāb in Dubai, Nādī an-Naṣr in Ajman, Nādī ‘Umān in Ra’s al-Khayma. Up until 1972 there were twenty four clubs active within the United Arab Emirates and in each of these there was a theatre troupe.⁴⁸¹ They did not always present plays. These were often merely sketches or occasional words and music pieces. The actors independently prepared the stage, the decorations and the costumes. In the day of no television or Internet these clubs fulfilled an exceptionally significant social role. The inhabitants met, talked, exchanged views. It was this very transfer of theatre from the schools to the clubs that resulted in its development. For actors did not have to be recruited from amongst pupils while the texts no longer needed to be confined to didactic matters.

The role played by the scout movement in the development of theatre in the Emirates must not be overlooked. Theatre productions were organised at scout camps during the spring break starting from 1959. Their short plays, songs and satirical sketches presented social problems such as the drinking of alcohol and the smoking of cigarettes.⁴⁸²

The play by the Egyptian Maḥmūd Ghanīm *al-Murū‘a al-muqni‘* (*Sufficient Chivalry*)⁴⁸³ staged in 1955 is considered the beginning of the theatre movement in the United Arab Emirates. The first text to be written by an Emirate writer, by Sulṭān ibn

⁴⁷⁹ Habib Ghuloom al-Attar, *The Development of Theatrical Activity in the Gulf Region*, United Arab Emirates 2009, p. 11.

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Barbara Michalak-Pikulska, *Contemporary Arabic Theatre in Kuwait and Bahrain*, in: Quaderni di Studi Arabi, No.19, Venezia 2001, p. 168, Sami A. Hanna, *A Modern Cultural History of Bahrain*, Baḡrayn 1991, pp. 89–95.

⁴⁸¹ ‘Abd al-Ilāh ‘Abd al-Qādir, *Ṭarīkh al-ḡaraka al-masraḡiyya fī dawlat al-Imārāt al-‘Arabiyya al-muttaḡida 1960–1986*, ash-Shāriqa-Abū Ḥabīb 2007, 2nd ed., p. 20.

⁴⁸² Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, *The Genesis of the Scout Movement in Sharjah*, ash-Shāriqa 2008, p. 46, Habeeb Ghuloom Al-Attar, *Theatre in the UAE*, in: Cultural Life in Emirates, United Arab Emirates 2008, pp. 28–29.

⁴⁸³ This play is also found entitled *Jābir ‘Atharāt al-Kirām*.

Muḥammad al-Qāsimī, is the play entitled *Nihāyat Sahyūn* (*The End of Zion*, 1958).⁴⁸⁴ This drama, in a similar way to the work by Juma' Gharīb, entitled *al-Islām wa at-ta'āwun* (*Islam and Cooperation*) and performed in 1959, generated a wave of demonstrations against the British. *Nihāyat Sahyūn* (*The End of Zion*) examines the problem of the Palestinian conflict while at the same time sharply condemning the British authorities. The play heats up the lively debate as to the future of the Arab world as well as the role of western powers in the settling of the problems of the Middle East.⁴⁸⁵ Both plays were performed at the Folk Club (Nādī ash-Sha'b) in ash-Shāriqa.

An exceptionally important role in the development and propagating of theatre in the Emirates has been played by the local newspapers: *ar-Rūla*, *Kawālīs* and *al-Masrah*.

The majority of critics connected with theatre are in agreement that the development of contemporary drama is linked to the visit to the Emirates in 1963 of the Iraqi Wāṭiq as-Sāmarā'ī.⁴⁸⁶ He possessed a knowledge about Arab and European theatre, which he was to share with Emirate youth during meetings in cafes. Interest turned out to be so strong that a decision was taken to build the first theatre in the Emirates. The inauguration took place on the 19th of August 1963 during which was staged as-Sāmarā'ī's play *Min ajl waladī* (*Because of my Son*). Encouraged by the success Wāṭiq as-Sāmarā'ī decided to stage another of his plays. Among which were a production of *al-'Adāla* (*Justice*, 1963). Observing the development of the theatre movement Sheikh of Dubai al-Maktūm ibn Rāshid invited the Iraqi creator to cooperate in the organising of a theatre group at the Youth Club (Nādī ash-Shabāb) in Dubai. The effect of this was the showing of the play *Sāmaḥīnī* (*Forgive Me*) and *Khālīd ibn al-Walīd* (*Khalid ibn al-Walid*). In 1969 as-Sāmarā'ī moved to Abu Dhabi where at Nādī al-Ahlī ar-Riyādī he prepared the play *Ṭabīb fī al-qarn al-'ashrīn* (*Doctors in the Twentieth Century*) and *Muṭawwa' wa Khamīs* (*The Pious and Khamis*).⁴⁸⁷ All the plays written and prepared by as-Sāmarā'ī enjoyed huge success. The texts were understandable as they dealt with subjects from everyday Emirate life, as well as referring to events from history and Arab Muslim culture. The productions were exactly produced scenically with the performances of the actors always carefully rehearsed.

In subsequent years there were to appear new theatre activists. Amongst them the Egyptian Zakī Ṭulaymāt who was responsible for developing the multifaceted programme connected with the development of Emirate theatre. The writer 'Abd ar-Raḥman al-Ṣāliḥ has claimed that *Ṭulaymāt constitutes an objective and true reception of the theatre movement in the Emirates*.⁴⁸⁸ Besides which he described his vision which foresaw dynamic changes in the Emirate's artistic movement starting from the huge financial outlays and finishing with the education of the public, which was to constitute the motor

⁴⁸⁴ This play also had the title *Wukala' Sahjun* (Agents of Zion).

⁴⁸⁵ 'Abd Ilah 'Abd Al-Qādir, *Ṭarīkh al-ḥaraka al-masraḥiyya fī dawlat al- Imārāt al-'Arabiyya al-mutaḥida 1960–1986*, Ash-Shāriqa-Abū Zabī 2007, 2nd ed., pp. 18–19.

⁴⁸⁶ Habeeb Ghuloom al-Attar, *Theatre in the UAE*, in: *Cultural Life in Emirates, United Arab Emirates* 2008, p. 25.

⁴⁸⁷ Habib Ghuloom al-Attar, *The Development of Theatrical Activity in the Gulf Region*, United Arab Emirates 2009, pp. 49–50.

⁴⁸⁸ 'Abd ar-Raḥman al- Ṣāliḥ, *Waqī' wa afaq al-masrah fī al- Imārāt al-'Arabiyya*, in: *Nashrat al-mahrajān al-masraḥī ath-thālith li-l-firaq al-ahliya li-duwal majlis at-ta'āwun al-khalī*, vols 1–2, Abū Zabī 1993, p. 4.

for the contemporary theatre. Finally, he talks about the subject of the artist's consciousness and his roles.⁴⁸⁹

Following the gaining of independence in 1971 the Ministry of Culture lavished financial support on the numerous theatre groups that were coming into being. It helped with the organising of workshops. New artists and directors came to the Emirates. Amongst whom it follows to mention: al-Munṣif as-Suwaysī, Ibrāhīm Jalāl, Fu'ad ash-Shaṭṭī, 'Abd Ilah 'Abd Al-Qādir and Ṣaqr Rashūd, who died tragically in an accident.

In the 1980s there were already 14 histrionic troupes, the most important of which is the **National Theatre for Youth and Art in Dubai** (*Masrah al-qawmī li-l-shabāb wa al-funūn*). The idea to found this group was taken in 1972, while a year later it was already in operation as the first artistic body in the Emirates. Young people were associated with different clubs that put on plays under the auspices of the Ministry of Sport and Youth. One of the most important plays is: *Al-tubaḥ ha-l-marra* (*Forgive Me this Time*) by 'Īsā Lūtāh and directed by Zā'in Jum'a in 1987. The drama concentrates on one of the most important social weaknesses that is indifference. The author points to the lack of possibility for understanding between people, while man is not the only element in the Universe. He has to understand his transitory nature. For too much attention is paid in man's life to unimportant things and he consequently loses everything that has real worth. The most important things in life happen quickly and one has to be diligent so as not to miss them. Art appears to bring with it a message of understanding amongst people. It shows that man devotes too much time to an analysis of his own experiences and consequently becomes indifferent to the problems of others.

The play entitled *Lahẓāt mansiyya* (*Forgotten Moments*) by the Iraqi dramatist Jalīl al-Qaysī and directed by Ḥabīb Ghulūm al-'Aṭṭār in 1989 shows the heroine, one still in love with her husband, living in the hope of the return of her beloved. The day begins with thoughts of him. She does not feel the need to analyse the psychic state that has accompanied her since he left. She is filled with happiness and joy when she receives a telegram that he is returning. When it turns out, however, that the postman has given her another letter by mistake and the husband is not going to return to her she falls into sorrow and despair. Life seems to her to be an endless band of unhappiness which results in her inability to see in life any sense and meaning.

The motif of suffering appears in many literary works. In the play *Al-Buqa'a* (*The Stain*) written by Ibrāhīm Sālim and directed by Aḥmad al-Anṣārī in 1992, the dramatist shows suffering as the force that shapes man's character. The hero is a young cripple who experiences suffering every day as a result of the way people perceive him even though he attempts to lead a normal life and to search for a career route for himself.

The members of the theatre under discussion came from various towns in the Emirates: Dubai, Ajman, Ra's al-Khayma, Umm al-Qaywayn, ash-Shāriqa. The most eminent personalities include: 'Abd Allāh 'Alī al-Muṭawwa', 'Alī Abū Khalīl, Ibrāhīm Jum'a, Ibrāhīm Yāqūb, Muḥammad Ḥasan, Jum'a Gharīb, Mūza al-Mazrū'ī, Aḥmad 'Abdūl, Ṣulṭān ash-Shā'ir, Aḥmad as-Sayyid, Ḥammad Ṣulṭān.

⁴⁸⁹ Habib Ghuloom al-Attar, *The Development of Theatrical Activity in the Gulf Region*, United Arab Emirates 2009, pp. 80–81.

The National Theatre in ash-Shāriqa (*Masrah ash-Shāriqa al-Waṭanī*) was created in 1976 and became one of the most active places for theatre in the United Arab Emirates. Troupe members included: 'Alī Khumays, Muḥammad Yūsuf, Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh, Ṣayf al-Ghanīm, 'Abd Allāh al-Manā'ī. The most important task of the group was the reactivation of cultural life in ash-Shāriqa.

One of the most interesting plays of this group is the drama *Hal shakil ya Za'āfaran?* (*Is That What You Did to Zafaran?*) by the Qatari 'Abd ar-Raḥman al-Manā'ī and directed by the Kuwaiti Fu'ad ash-Shaṭṭī in 1983. The hero of the play, Za'faran, a peasant cultivating melons, under the influence of pressure exerted by his wife stops selling the goods in his village and goes to the town so as to cash in more favourably on his harvests. This is an opportunity for him to confront the simple life led in the countryside with the pace of life in the town. The author is on the one hand referring to the Biblical influence exerted by Eve on Adam, who persuaded him to eat from the forbidden fruit which finally resulted in their expulsion from paradise, while on the other to show people who stand before a dilemma and choice involving new life routes. They are not devoid of fears and apprehension over the prospective changes. Only adapting to the new conditions will enable them to occupy a higher position in the social hierarchy.

Kūt Abu Miftāḥ (Abu Miftah's Coat) was written and directed by Abd Allāh al-Manā'ī. This is a story whose hero is involved in pearl fishing. The action is taken back into a past in which his ancestors live. This is an opportunity to recall times past as well as to show the social changes that have occurred since the discovery of crude oil. The dramatist desires to grasp a fragment of the reality that is passing and in particular that which is new entering into the frame of vision. Here one can clearly see two attitudes in relation to the past: that which demands changes in the name of inescapable and necessary progress and the attitude of reflection, melancholy and regret for the former, simpler way of life. The coat of the title symbolises the risk that modernity brings with it for not all of us are able to adapt to it.

The play *Rā'i al-būm abbirni (Captain, Take Me With You)* written by Ismā'il 'Abd Allāh and directed in 1993 by Jamāl Maṭar is an attempt to show the greed of man, who upon the death of his brother wants to take over his fortune. In his rapacity he breaks moral principles and is prepared to deal with anyone who in any way whatsoever threatens him in his designs. In a situation devoid of any perspectives of overcoming him his nephew decides to burn his father's inheritance. The drama shows an individual able to spread fear and subordinate to himself weaker persons not possessing the physical or psychic strengths to withstand violence.

The Dubai Folk Theatre (*Masrah Dubayy ash-Sha'bī*) was founded in 1976 as a branch of the Dubai Association of Folk Arts and Theatre (*Firqat Masrah Jam'iyyat Dubayy li-l-Funūn ash-Sha'biyya*). Among its eminent representatives are: Ismā'il Muḥammad, Aḥmad al-Anṣārī, Jum'a Mubārak, Samīra Aḥmad, Munā Hamza, Fāṭima Muḥammad. The first performance was staged in 1977.

There have appeared within the literary output of the Gulf many works devoted to domestic staff and service. Their heroes are usually Asian servants. The subject matter being an echo of the sizeable influx of labour motivated by financial remuneration. The play *Maṭlūb khaddāma hālan (Home Help Required at Once)* written by Muḥammad Sayyid, and directed in 1984 by Aḥmad al-Anṣārī, shows the situation and problems

connected with the presence of immigrants in Emirate households. The greatest of these is the influence on the upbringing of children. Servants were on the whole of another religion, spoke different languages and represented another cultural tradition. The authors of the spectacle wanted to arouse in their audience a sense of responsibility for their children.

The play *Faltuh (Sarcastically)* was written and directed by Ḥasan Rajab in 1990 in the form of short genre-occasional scenes. The authors appear to be ordinary people, the world is the stage and life the director. Each of the scenes deals with a different important social problem. Here are dealt with important matters such as relations with servants and household staff, the burden of the telecommunication system and Internet and mere trifles, for example the exorbitant price of footballers.

Human existence and the attitude of man to suffering is the subject of the play *Bū Mahyus fī wartah (Bu Mahyus in Trouble)* written by Jamāl Sālim and directed in 1992 by Muḥammad Sayyid. The problem matter undertaken is one of the most important within the countries of the Gulf, namely the search for medical treatment abroad. This is connected with the unwillingness on the public in general to be treated by local doctors. They are witnesses to the inadequacies of the healthcare system in their country and know no peace until they have gone abroad. Foreign doctors appear to them to be more efficient and worthy of their trust. The dramatist attempts to convince the public, i.e. ordinary citizens, to regain trust in local doctors and specialists.

National Theatre in Dubai (*Masrah Dubayy al-Ahlī*) was founded in 1981 (earlier it had functioned under the name of the Experimental Theatre (al-Masrah at-Tajribī). The company was joined by numerous young well educated enthusiasts something that found reflection in the high level of creativity produced. These included: Jamāl Yūsuf Maṭar, Khālīd Aḥmad Jawwād, Khālīd Jum'a, 'Umar Ghubāsh, Najī al-Hāy. Besides the staging of theatrical works, the organising of lecturers and literary meetings presentations for children were also promoted.

The action of the play *Jamīla (Jamīla)* written and directed by Jamāl Maṭar in 1991 is played out on the coast, for the inhabitants of the Emirates are daily linked to the sea-shore and the experiences of all of them are directed to the coast. This was the main motor of local life that gave the population employment, nourishment, rest, freedom, hope and a subject for stories. In the play the grandmother is the representative of the past and tells the grandchildren stories and resurrects the local legends. While the heroine of the drama is a beautiful girl whose father has put aside a rich dowry for whoever tries for her hand. Finally this is to befall poor Majnun, a boy from a social underclass, who unaware of the danger dives and in bringing pearls wins her hand. The father bound by his promise must give his daughter over to this good-for-nothing. The heroine equally does not object for her dream is to leave the family home. Once again it is shown what an important role is played in social relationships by breeding and wealth.

The Umm Al-Qaywayn National Theatre (*Masrah Umm al-Qaywayn al-Qawmī*) was founded in 1978. Its leading representatives include: Sa'īd Sālim, Jāsim Khalfān, Sālim Sayfa, Sayf al-Ghāwī. The theatre's activity is presented by the play *Bidūn 'anwān (Without Address)* written by the Egyptian Aḥmad Sālim and directed by Sayyid Sālim in 1986. Once again the authors have taken up the subject of the newly enriched society that has forgotten about its basic obligations. The protagonists are parents neglecting their

children. Absorbed in the 'dash for cash' they have no time to bring up their charges, who fall foul of drugs and bad company.

Another play *Meyd in Gulf* (*Made in the Gulf*) written by the Egyptian Nabīl Badrān and directed in 1991 by his compatriot Majdī Kāmil equally addresses the times of the boom economy and the revelling in goods from all over the world that had started to flow into the Emirates. The authors urge for great self sufficiency and a reduction in the dependence on foreign products.

The theatre movement in the Emirates is not limited to these five groups. We may note equally the activities of others such as: *Masrah 'Ajmān ash-Sha'bī* (The Folk Theatre) in Ajman, and *Masrah an-Nādī al-Waṭanī li-l-thaqāfa wa al-funūn* (The National Club of Culture and Art) in Ajman, *al-Masrah al-ḥadīth* (The Contemporary Theatre) in ash-Shāriqa, *Masrah Ra's al-Khayma al-Waṭanī* (The National Theatre) in Ra's al-Khayma, *Masrah al-Fujayra al-Qawmī* (The National Theatre in Fujayra, *Masrah aṭ-Ṭalī'a* (The Avant-Garde Theatre) in Khor Fakkan, *Masrah Kalbā' ash-Sha'bī* (The Folk Theatre) in Kalba, *Jam'iyyat Dībā li-th-thaqāfa wa al-funūn wa-l-masrah* (The Association of Culture, Art and the Theatre) in Diba.⁴⁹⁰

The activities of these many theatres prove that Emirate theatre is buoyant, presently drawing more heavily on local Emirate texts, from the plays of Syrian dramatists such as Sa'd Allāh Wannūs and 'Alī 'Aqla 'Ursān or Egyptians: Sa'd ad-Din Wahbah, 'Alī Sālim and Maḥfūz 'Abd ar-Raḥman. There are also produced adaptations of western plays with minor adaptations to accommodate them to local conditions in order for them to be well received by Emirate theatre goers.

The organisation of the ash-Shāriqa Theatre Days (*Ayyām ash-Shāriqa al-masrahiyya*) is viewed as a breakthrough in the history of Emirate theatre, this had its beginnings in 1984. The originator was Sheikh ash-Shāriqa, Sulṭān ibn Muḥammad Al Qāsimī. The aim of the festival was the development of theatre everywhere within the Emirates, the promoting of the performing arts, the development of knowledge about the theatre and art amongst young people. Already in its first year leading companies from Dubai, Shāriqa, al-'Ayn, al-Fujayra, Khor Fakkan and Ra's al-Khayma took part. The festival heightened rivalry, which manifested itself in the quality of the productions presented. Amongst the dramatists staged were two plays by Emirate authors: *Al-Ard titkallam ūrdū* (*The Earth Speaks Urdu*) written by Aḥmad Rashīd Thānī and *Sirr al-kanz* (*The Mystery of the Treasure*) by Zā'in Jum'a.⁴⁹¹ Both plays were written in 1984 and concentrate on the social theme connected with the influx of huge numbers of immigrants to work in the Emigrates. Streets full of Asians appears a slight to the national security of the state. The situation becomes out of control when a small girl Layla is murdered (in the play *al-Ard titkallam ūrdū – The Earth Speaks in Urdu*, directed by Ismā'il 'Abd Allāh). On the basis of this true story the creators consider in what way the situation in the country is out of control and how it has resulted in a crime whose victim is such an innocent and young being; how one is to handle those who travel to the Emirates for work and how

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. Habib Ghuloom al-Attar, *The Development of Theatrical Activity in the Gulf Region*, United Arab Emirates 2009, pp. 87–94.

⁴⁹¹ Cf. 'Abd al-Ilāh 'Abd Al-Qādir, *Ṭarīkh al-ḥaraka al-masrahiyya fī dawlat al-Imārāt al-'Arabiyya al-muttaḥida 1960–1986*, Ash-Shāriqa-Abū Zābī 2007, 2nd ed., pp. 149–192.

their presence influences the safety of Emirate citizens. There is no absence of elements of folklore and examples of maritime songs in the play.⁴⁹²

The ash-Shāriqa Theatre Days, with several breaks, have achieved after twenty five years enormous success. Emirate theatre has the possibility to confront its achievements with those from other Arab countries allowing for development amongst actors, dramatists and directors. These Days also have an enormous influence on the local population. Their plays have dealt with concrete social problems. The dramatists succeed in following – without a loss of authenticity – the rapid changes occurring in the country. They became witnesses to the social, cultural, and society changes. They respect their own past, they desire to continue their traditions but after an adaptation of them to new functions and content.

A subsequent step in reply to the need for development of theatre in the United Arab Emirates was the founding in the 1990s of the *Theatre Association (Jam'īyya al-Mas-raḥīyyīn)*, whose task is to combine in activities with the authorities aimed at achieving greater financial and developmental possibilities. Besides, the Association represents Emirate theatrical institutions abroad. It has also been responsible for the organisation of theatre workshops, conferences, festivals, competitions and the popularisation of theatre amongst young people.

Without doubt Emirate theatre differs today noticeably from what it was in the past. It is an obvious fact that the movement has achieved a level of maturity both in the quantity and quality of the dramas written and produced. The originality of Emirate theatrical creators suggests that the period of infancy for this recently born art is already truly in the past.

The most interesting dramas of the last decade include: *Qabr al-wālī (The Benefactor's Grave)* by Jamāl Maṭar of 1998. The subject under discussion is a timeless one and recalls the novel by Ṭaha Ḥusayn *Shajarat al-bu's (The Tree of Unhappiness)* and the short stories by Maḥmūd Taymūr. The story takes place in a small village where rain has not fallen for a long time. The drought is blamed on the dumb heroine of the drama (in a similar way to how the son's ugly wife is blamed for all the misfortunes that befall the family in the novel *Shajarat al-bu's*). There happen upon the village two men who desire to enrich themselves through the sale of the water they have brought on their donkey. When the animal dies they bury it under a nearby tree. Then the inhabitants of the village approach and while greetings of welcome are exchanged it starts to rain. The situation is a great blessing and the saviour of the village. The inhabitants consider the guests to be sent from heaven, while the buried animal as holy remains (there are similar occurrences in the short stories of Taymūr, e.g. *'Āmm Mitwallī (Mitwalla's Uncle)*, *Shaykh Sayyid al-abīt (Stupid Sheikh Sayyid)*). The incomers decide to take advantage of the naivety of the people and to stay on in the village which results in many amusing situations. The drama is enhanced by local colour and folk songs. This subject matter is for certain to be repeated many times more as exploitation of the poor and the naive is prevalent in all times and places.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹² Cf. Habib Ghuloom al-Attar, *The Development of Theatrical Activity in the Gulf Region*, United Arab Emirates 2009, pp. 144–147.

⁴⁹³ On the basis of an interview conducted by Barbara Michalak-Pikulska with Bilāl Baddūr in Dubai 20th of January 2010.

The play *Ḥabbat ar-raml* (*A Grain of Sand*) written and directed by Naji al-Ḥay in 1990 reflects the social relations within the family. The hero is a boy who following the death of his parents is taken in by a paternal uncle. Living under one roof with him he falls in love with his daughter. He is unable to count on the favours of his relation for he is an orphan, and consequently does not occupy an appropriate social position or possess material security. The young lover does not give up, he attempts to show his maturity and decides to sail on a trade voyage to India, which will give him an opportunity to earn money. However, the day of his return is the day of his beloved's nuptials. The desperate hero dances the wedding dance until he dies. His dreams were not realised because he did not respect the rules that regulate society. We can find in the drama references to the Emirate culture of folk dances, for example al-liwā.⁴⁹⁴ Once again the dramatist has dealt with a difficult subject matter: that of a reduction of the father's authority for the benefit of all the members of the family. The reasons for the subservience of women to men is also analysed. He has also not omitted the problem of the imposing of traditional marriages as a result of purely material motifs.

The subject matter of the play *Wa madhā ba'du?* (*And What Then?*) by Ḥabīb Ghulūm al-ʿAṭṭār from 2002 is freedom of speech. It depicts an unhappy and lonely journalist who loses his job as a result of articles of a political nature. This event disillusioned him and forces him to give up on his youthful ideals. He shuts himself away in a room with a computer and piles of paper. After losing his wife – with whom he assumes he is conducting a conversation – he feels lonely, he experiences a period of depression and cannot perceive the sense in life itself. His dead wife symbolises in the play the lost homeland, which is constantly present in the life of the hero. The room becomes his prison, in which he undergoes the loss of his individuality. He writes articles which he sells a budding journalist. Ḥabīb Ghulūm al-ʿAṭṭār's play *Wa madhā ba'du?* (*And What Then?*) was given an award in 2002.⁴⁹⁵

Upon reading the play reflections on the media come to the fore, the television and Internet, which play and will play a key role in the forming of ways of behaviour in Arab society as well as shaping outlooks. The author considers, in a way similar to many publicists and journalists within the Emirates, that the best way to fight the negative influences within the state is the development, modernisation and free functioning of the local media.⁴⁹⁶

In the works of the dramatists theatrical plays cease to be a passive account of events illustrating traditional social life, but rather consciously undertake the question of man and his place within the contemporary world. Not only has the thematic scope of the dramatists broadened but also the differentiation of the roles of the heroes' individual and social attitudes to the changes brought in by the current times. The quick arising of the new rich districts that accompanies the economic development arouses mixed feelings in the older inhabitants. This is recounted by the play 'Umar Ghubāsh entitled *Shammā*

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Habib Ghuloom al-Attar, *The Development of Theatrical Activity in the Gulf Region*, United Arab Emirates 2009, p. 91.

⁴⁹⁵ On the basis of an interview conducted by Barbara Michalak-Pikulska with Ḥabīb Ghulūm al-ʿAṭṭār in ash-Shāriqa on the 21st of January 2010.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. F. as-Sayegh, *Arab Media Must Try to Meet Its Social Responsibility*, Gulf News 23.07.2004.

(*Shammā*) of 2003. The heroine observes the destruction of the old houses and bazaars on whose place new buildings arise that reflect in their dimensions and splendour the newly enriched society. A woman experiences sadness, pain, helplessness and loss. In a similar way to the hero of Ḥabīb Ghulūm al-‘Aṭṭār’s play she also finds solace in talking to her dead husband. She is aware of her own distinctness and is tormented by the social regulations in force. The play is clearly linked to the economic boom which resulted in an influx of capital, labour and the construction of the cities. The new social class caused damage to the traditional model of life. Despite the fact that the generation of grandfathers and fathers still tightly held on to traditional values and religion this generation of educated sons was, and is open to progress and civilisation.

The theatrical productions that were staged from the very beginning were connected with the social current of expression which diligently accompanied the economic changes. The dramas presented a society that comprehended the aim of life and the status of individual family members in a traditional way. For from men there was expected strength, riches, a high social position, while from women total subservience, a conscientious fulfilment of domestic duties as well as numerous heirs which would consolidate the image of a woman as a wife and mother. Dramatists, in presenting concrete examples from the reality that surrounded them, desire to inform one of these facts, and to instruct society. For the discovery of oil changed and divided society, one that had hitherto lived from fishing and the trade in pearls. The young generation brought up in plenty is directed towards quick profits, comfort and a consumer style of life.

We also observe in Emirate literature the problems of struggled for independence along with those of Arab unity. This can be particularly strongly felt in the plays of Sulṭān ibn Muḥammad Al Qāsimī. The drama mentioned at the beginning of *Nihāyat Ṣahyūn* (*The End of Zion*) of 1958 undertakes an analysis of the Palestinian conflict to ultimately lay blame at the foot of Western powers for the undoing of the Palestinian people. Another play by Dr. Al Qāsimī, entitled *‘Awdat Hūlākū* (*Hulag’s Return*) from 1998 plays out the action in the 13th century though events actually refer to the present day. Already in the *Prologue* does the dramatist make it clear that:

*In reading the history of the Arabs I discovered that what occurred before the collapse of the Abbasid Caliph is similar to that which is occurring at present within Arab countries. Therefore I wrote this play from the perspective of history in order to present our painful present.*⁴⁹⁷

The events in the drama are based on historical facts and relate to the taking of the Abbasid capital by the grandson of Chingīz Khān. The author shows the background of negotiations between the Caliph Musta’ṣim and Hūlāgu and the crisis that subsequently arose. All the events end tragically – with the death of the caliph and the fall of Baghdad. The play exposes two protagonists: the figure of the weak and naive caliph as well as of the wise military leader ad-Dwaydār. Caliph Musta’ṣim in the face of danger escapes responsibility for pleasure and jollity. He is unable to behave in a dignified way in opposition to his commander who is prepared to sacrifice his life for the good of his

⁴⁹⁷ Sulṭān ibn Muḥammad Al Qāsimī, *Holaku’s Return*, Shāriqa 2004, p. 5.

homeland. Between them Al Qāsimī places the figure of the traitor Ibn al-‘Alqām, the minister who has conspired with Hūlāgu in order to later become the marionette ruler of Baghdad. He is reduced to the rank of a physical object, completely subordinated to the invaders in a way that later his son is also to be. The minister finally becomes aware of the immensity of the evil he has instigated but it is already too late. His place is taken by his son – bearing the self same name.

The play shows how weak and defenceless man can be in the face of history. The dramatist ponders the moral evaluation of his protagonists’ deeds, wherein the threat of which arouse raw instincts, rapacity and hypocrisy. For after all history is awash with the constant letting of blood, of victories, the defeated and death. Thus man is embroiled in history. It appears that subsequent generations are on their way to death. The past, the present and the future do not differ from each other. Therefore the play *‘Awdat Hūlākū* (*Hulag’s Return*) by Sulṭān ibn Muḥammad Al Qāsimī has a timeless quality to it.

In summing up it follows to state that within the course of a few dozen years Emirate writers have created a substructure for the dramatic arts in every possible meaning of the phrase. They have developed their own style and subject matter. They have shown contemporary society in the day of immense economic-social changes. They have been courageous enough to criticise backward traditions and customs, to expose naked rapacity and have analysed the behaviour of this newly enriched society regardless of the consequences that threaten them. They have become the witnesses of social, cultural and structural changes.

Conclusion

In summing up it follows to emphasise that Emirate literature is a young literature and one unknown in Europe. It has been produced, chiefly, on the basis of the classical literary language, and its common denominator is the registering of the social, economic and cultural changes occurring within the United Arab Emirates following their gaining of independence. The present book constitutes a study into the modern literature of the Emirates. The materials assembled have been interpreted by taking into consideration the broad cultural context of the Emirates.

An analysis of the creative output of the authors mentioned results in reflection in a synthetic way of the common phenomena expressed, which include changes in the traditional social structure connected with the economic boom. This in turn connected itself with respect for one's own past and a desire for a continuation of tradition, but after its application to new functions and content. The inhabitants of the United Arab Emirates understand that they must implement certain changes in their social and family relations, yet they are at the same time conservative, for example preserving their traditional style of dress out of a fear of a loss of their own identity. Equally the sea and its connection with the life of the Emirates' inhabitants is widely described in the poetry and prose. Finally there are universal topics like love. There is also no lack of involvement through the lyrical, the epic and the dramatic in the problems of liberation struggles and Arab unity.

I am fully aware that the study does not cover the entirety of the literary material available, but a single, short stay in the Emirates made it impossible to reach all sources, authors and materials. I do, however, hope that I have managed to bring the reader closer to the interesting unknown world of contemporary literature from the United Arab Emirates.

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Biographies of Emirate Poets

Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm was born in 1962. He graduated in Arabic Studies from the University in Beirut. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt), the Association of Islamic Literature (Rābiṭa al-adab al-islāmī) and the Cultural-Scientific Association (Nadwa ath-thaqāfa wa al-'ulūm). He is the author of many volumes of poetry composed in classical Arabic and in dialect. He received a prize for his literary works in 2009. He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Ṣaḥwat al-waraq* (1990), *Fasād al-milḥ* (1997), *Hadhā min abnā' aṭ-ṭayr* (2000), *aṭ-Ṭariq ilā ra's at-tall* (2002).

Khalīd al-Baddūr was born in 1961 in Dubai. He graduated in Computer Studies from the Emirates University in 1987. He received his MA in scenario writing from Ohio University in the USA in 1996. He received the Yūsuf al-Khāl Prize for his volume of poetry *Layl* in 1991. He is the author of many volumes of poetry composed in classical Arabic and in dialect. He cooperates closely with newspapers. He has worked as a TV-speaker in Emirati Television. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Layl* (1991), *Shitā'* (2002), *Maṭar 'alā al-baḥr* (2009) and one volume in dialect *Ḥibr wa ghazal* (1999).

Aḥmad Rāshid Thānī was born in 1962. He graduated in Literature from the Emirates University in 1985. He actively participates in the cultural life of the Emirates, publishing widely within the pages of literary newspapers and magazines. He is also an author of dramas and plays. He writes books about Emirati history and culture. He has received the Sultan 'Uways Prize for his literary works. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He is the author of many volumes of poetry composed in classical Arabic and in dialect. He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Sab' qaṣā'id* (1981), *Hadhā kullu mā ladayy* (1988), *Damm ash-sham'a* (1991), *Ḥaythu al-kull* (1995), *Ḥāfa al-gharf* (1999), *Julūs aṣ-ṣabāḥ 'alā al-baḥr* (2003), *Yā'ī al-layl wa ya'khudhnī* (2007). In 1996 he published a volume of poetry in dialect: *Yā al-mākil ikonizī wa yā al-khārif dhahab*.

Nāṣir Jubrān was born in 1952. He works as a post-office supervisor. He is the author of many volumes of poetry composed in classical Arabic and in dialect. He actively participates in the cultural life in Emirate, publishing widely within the pages of literary newspapers and magazines. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Mādhā law tarakū al-khayl tamḍī* (1990), *Istiḥālāt as-sukūn* (1993), and the collections of short stories: *Mayādir* (1990), *Nāfūra ash-shazāyā* (1993).

Jawriyya al-Khāja was born in 1958, graduated in Arabic Studies from the Emirates University. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍa-

bā' al-Imārāt) and the World Art Center in Dubai (Markaz Dubayy al-‘ālamī li-l-funūn). She has published the volume of poetry: *Ṣaḥīl ar-rūḥ* (1999).

Wafā' Khāzandār graduated in Business Management in 2002. She also graduated in Fine Arts Studies from the American University in the United Arab Emirates in 2010. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt) and the World Art Center in Dubai (Markaz Dubayy al-‘ālamī li-l-funūn). She has received many prizes for her art and literary works. To date she has had over twenty personal exhibitions. She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Silāḥ abyad* (2005), *Khāzinat al-faraḥ* (2009) and the collection of short stories *Būrtry jaddatī* (Ajman 2009).

Zabiyya Khamīs was born in 1958 in Abu Dhabi. She graduated in Political Studies from the Indiana University in the USA. She received a diploma in Anthropology from the University of London in Great Britain. She also received her MA from the American University in Cairo. She lives and works in Cairo. She actively participates in the cultural life of the Emirates, publishing widely within the pages of literary newspapers and magazines. She received a prize for her literary works in 2010 in Ajman in UAE. She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Khuṭwa fawq al-arḍ* (1982), *ath-Thunā' iyya: anā al-mar'a al-arḍ kullu aḍ-ḍalū* (1982), *Sabābāt al-mahra al-'umaniyya* (1985), *Qaṣā'id al-hubb* (1985), *as-Sulṭān yarjum imra'a ḥablī bi-l-baḥr* (1988), *Jannat al-jinnarālāt* (1993), *Mawt al-'ā'ila* (1993), *Intiḥār ḥādī' jiddān* (1995), *al-Qarmuẓī* (1995), *al-Mashī fī aḥlām al-rūmāntikiyya* (1996), *Shaghaf* (2005), *Naḥwa al-abad* (2008). She has also published the books: *Urūq al-jir wa al-hana* (1985), *Ibtisāmāt mākira* (1996), *ash-Shi'riyya al-'urūbiyya wa diktātūriyyat ar-rūḥ* (1996).

Khālid ar-Rāshid graduated in Arabic Studies from the Emirates University. He worked in Emirate Television and actively participated in the cultural life of the Emirates, publishing widely within the pages of the literary newspaper “al-Ittiḥād”. He lives in the Himalayas. He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Kulluhu azraq* (2007) and *Munamnam* (2009).

Jamīla ar-Ruwayḥī works as a teacher. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt), the Association of Islamic Literature (Rābiṭa al-adab al-islāmī) and the Cultural-Scientific Association (Nadwa ath-thaqāfa wa al-'ulūm). She actively participates in the cultural life of the Emirate. She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Bukā' al-maṭar* (2005), *Imra'a ar-raml* (2006), *Ṣaḥīl khadrā* (2008).

Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī was born in ash-Shāriqa in 1964. She graduated in Education Studies in 1988. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt), and the Arab Writers Association (Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-'Arab). She works for the Ministry of Education. She actively participates in literary festivals and poetry evenings. She received the prize for Best book published in 2009 in ash-Shāriqa. She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Hadḥā al-masā' lanā* (1997), *Bawḥ al-ḥamām* (2008) and the collection of short stories: *Hamas ash-shawāṭī'*, *ash-Shawāṭī'*

al-fārigha’, novel *al-Jasad ar-rāḥil* and the following stories for children: *Aḥmad wa as-samaka*, *al-‘Uṣfūra wa al-waṭan*, *Ghābat as-sa’āda*, *Salāma*, *Ḥakīma*.

Thānī as-Suwaydī was born in 1965. He writes poetry and prose. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt). He has published the volume of poetry *Li-yajiffa rīq al-baḥr* (1991) and the novel *ad-Dīzil*.

‘Abd Allāh al-Hadiya ash-Shaḥḥī was born in 1962 in Ra’s al-Khayma in the UAE. He actively participates in cultural life both in the Emirates and abroad. He cooperates with Emirate TV in Ra’s al-Khayma. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt) and the Cultural-Scientific Association (Nadwa ath-thaqāfa wa al-‘ulūm). He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Ibtisām al-‘umr*, *Ilā matā*, *Ayna anta* (2000).

‘Alī al-Sha’ālī graduated in Civil Engineering from the Emirates University. He received his MA from George Washington University in the USA. He is the director of the Sheikh Moḥammad bin Rāshid Al Maktūm Foundation. He actively participates in the cultural life of the Emirates. He is a member of the Cultural-Scientific Association (Nadwa ath-thaqāfa wa al-‘ulūm). He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Naḥla wa rabāba* (2004), *Wujūh wa ukhrā mat ‘aba* (2010).

Maysūn Ṣaqr was born in 1959. She worked for the Ministry of Culture in Abu Dhabi. She is the author of many volumes of poetry composed in classical Arabic and in Egyptian dialect. She is also an artist. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt). She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Hakadhā ismī al-ashyā’* (1982), *ar-Rīhaqān* (1992), *al-Bayt* (1992), *Jiryān fī māda al-jasad* (1992), *Makān akhar* (1994), *Rajul majnūn lā yuḥibbunī* (2001), *Armalat qāṭi’ tarīq* (2007) and the novel *Rīḥāna* (2003).

Ḥārib aḏ-Zāhirī was born in 1964 in al-‘Ayn. He graduated from university in the USA. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt). He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Qubla ‘alā khadd al-qamar* (1999) and *Shams shafatayki* (2002) and the collections of short stories: *Mandulīn* (1997) and *Layl ad-damā* (2005).

Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Ubayd was born in 1967. He graduated in Arabic Studies from the Emirates University. He received his MA from the ‘Ayn Shams University in Cairo. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt), the Association of Islamic Literature (Rābiṭa al-adab al-islāmī) and the Cultural-Scientific Association (Nadwa ath-thaqāfa wa al-‘ulūm). He writes poetry and critical works. He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Shumū’ wa qanādīl* (1991), *Ma’ al-layl* (1993), *‘Ashiq fī zaman al-ghurba* (1995), *Min aghānī al-‘āshiq al-qadīm* (1998), *Ākhir al-qawāfīl* (2004), *Ru’ā nābiḍa* (2005) and the critical works: *al-Khalīj al-‘arabī fī al-‘aṣr al-mu’āṣir* (1998), *Kashshāf al-adab al-Imārātī al-mu’āṣir* (2005).

Aḥmad al-‘Asam was born in 1964. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt) and the Cultural-Scientific Association (Nadwa

ath-thaqāfa wa al-‘ulūm). He has published the volume of poetry: *Yaḥduth hadhā faqat* (2009).

Ṣāliḥa Ghābish was born in 1960. She graduated in Arabic Studies. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt). Being extremely active she cooperates with newspapers and cultural clubs. She is the Head of the Girls’ Club (Nādī al-Banāt) in ash-Shāriqa. She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Bi-intiẓār ash-shams* (1992), *al-Marāyā laysat hiyā* (1997).

Shihāb Ghānim was born in 1940. He graduated in Engineering from university in the USA in 1963. He studied Business Management in London. He obtained his MA in 1975 from India, and received his PhD in Economics in 1989 in Great Britain. He has composed many pieces of poetry collected in several volumes which were published in 2009 in Abu Dhabi as *Dīwān Shihāb Ghānim*.

Nujūm al-Ghānim was born in 1962. She graduated from the Information Faculty of the University of Ohio in the USA. She worked on the Emirati newspaper “al-Ittiḥād”. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt). She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Masā’ al-janna* (1989), *al-Jarā’ir* (1991), *Rawāḥil* (1996), *Manāzil al-jullanār* (2000), *Lā waṣf limā anā fīhi* (2005), *Malā’ikat al-ashwāq al-ba’ida* (2008).

Rahaf al-Mubārak actively participates in the cultural life of the Emirates. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt) and the Association of Islamic Literature (Rābiṭa al-adab al-islāmī). She has received many prizes for her literary works from the Women’s Club in ash-Shāriqa and Zayd University. She has published the volume of poetry: *Ayna qalbī...?* (2008).

Muḥammad al-Mazrū’ī was born in 1962. He is poet, writer and artist. He actively participates in the cultural life of the Emirates. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt). He has published the following volumes of poetry: *al-Lāmūs*, *Riḥat damm*, *Lakinnaka anta yā Ādam*, *Araq an-namūdhaj*, *Bilā sabab liannanā fuqarā’* (2009).

Al-Hanūf Muḥammad was born in 1972. She graduated in English Literature from the Emirates University in 1994. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt). She has published the following volumes of poetry: *as-Samāwāt* (1996) and *Judrān* (2005).

Karīm Ma’tūq was born in 1959. He works for the Ministry of Culture in Abu Dhabi. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā’ al-Imārāt). He received the prize and title Amīr ash-shu’rā’ (Prince of Poets) in 2008. He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Manāhil* (1988), *Ṭufūla* (1992), *Hadhā anā* (1995), *A’ṣāb as-sukkar* (not dated) and the novel *Hadath fī Iṣṭambūl* (1996).

Khulūd al-Mu’allā graduated in Architecture from the Emirate University. She received her MA in Business Management in Great Britain. She has also graduated in Arabic

Studies from the University in Beirut. She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Hunā ḍayya 't az-zaman* (1997), *Waḥdaka* (1999), *Hā' al-ghā'ib* (2003).

Ibrāhīm Al-Hāshimī was born in 1961. In 1984 he graduated in Business Management from the Emirates University. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt) and the Cultural-Scientific Association (Nadwa ath-thaqāfa wa al-'ulūm). He is the author of volumes of poetry composed in classical Arabic and in dialect. He also cooperates with literary newspapers. He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Munākhāt ūlā* (1996), *Tafāṣīl* (2000), *Qalaq* (2000).

'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Wahāb was born in 1963. He graduated from the Emirates University in 1985. He cooperates with newspapers. He has published the volume of poetry *Lā aḥad* (2009).

Biographies of Emirate Writers

'Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad was born in 1957 in Dubai. He studied for three years in Great Britain. He worked for the Emirati newspapers: "al-Azmina al-'arabiyya" (1979), "al-Ittiḥād" (1982–1988), "al-Bayān" (1988–2000). At present he works for the English-language newspaper "Gulf News" as the editor-in-chief. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He is Secretary General of the Ṣulṭān al-'Uways Cultural Foundation. He has published the following collections of short stories: *as-Sibāḥa fī 'aynay khālīj yatawaḥaṣh* (1982), *al-Baydār* (1987), *'Alā ḥāfat an-nahār* (1992) and the critical studies: *Kharbashāt fī ḥudūd al-mumkin* (1997), *an-Niẓam al-'ālamī aḍ-ḍaḥik* (1998), *ar-Ru'asā' 'andamā yughanūn* (2000).

Laylā Aḥmad is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). She has published the collection of short stories *Al-Khayma, al-mihrajān wa al-waṭan* (1984).

Rawḍa al-Balūshī was born in al-Ayn. She has published her literary works since 2003. She has published the collection of short stories *Bāṣ al-qiyāma* (2009).

Asmā' az-Zar'ūnī was born in ash-Shāriqa in 1964. She graduated in Education Studies in 1988. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt) and the Arab Writers' Association (Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-'Arab). She works for the Ministry of Education. She actively participates in cultural events. She received the prize for Best Book published in 2009 in ash-Shāriqa. She has published two volumes of poetry: *Hadhā al-masā' lanā* (1997) and *Bawḥ al-ḥamām* (2008), the collections of short stories: *Hamas ash-shawāṭi'*, *ash-Shawāṭi' al-fāriḡha*, novel *al-Jasad ar-rāḥil*, and the following stories for children: *Aḥmad wa as-samaka*, *al-'Uṣfūra wa al-waṭan*, *Ghābat as-sa'āda*, *Salāma*, *Ḥakīma*.

'Abd ar-Riḍā as-Sajwānī was born in 1959 in ash-Shāriqa. He graduated in Arabic Studies from the Emirates University. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He works for the Ministry of Education. He

has published the following collections of short stories: *Dhalika az-zamān* (1978), *Zala al-'udhārī* (1980), *ar-Rafḍ* (1992), *Inḥidār* (2001), *Hitaf ash-shams* (2001), *Ishra'a al-layl* (2003).

Salmā Maṭar Sayf (real name: Maryam 'Abd Allāh Abū Shihāb) was born in Dubai. She has published the following collections of short stories: *'Ushba* (1998), *Hājir* (1997).

Amīna 'Abd Allāh Bū Shihāb was born in Ajman in 1960. She is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). She has published the following collections of short stories: *as-Safar ilā al-janna*, *Mahra*.

'Alī 'Abd al-'Azīz ash-Sharḥān was born in 1950 in Ra's al-Khayma. He graduated in Linguistic Studies from university in Great Britain. He has worked as a professor at the Emirati University, subsequently becoming Minister of Higher Education. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He has published the collection of short stories: *ash-Shaqā'* (ed. I, 1977; ed. II, 1992), and the books: *al-Maṭbu'at al-'aṣriyya* (1977), *Taḥawwulāt al-lugha ad-dārija* (1990).

Ḥārib az-Zāhirī was born in 1964 in al-'Ayn. He graduated from university in the USA. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He has published the following volumes of poetry: *Qubla 'alā khadd al-qamar* (1999) and *Shams shafatayki* (2002) and the collections of short stories: *Mandulīn* (1997) and *Layl ad-damā* (2005).

Nāṣir az-Zāhirī was born in al-'Ayn in 1960. He graduated in French Literature from the Emirates University in 1984. He received a diploma from the Institute of Journalism at the Sorbon in Paris. He writes articles for Emirati newspapers. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He has published the collection of short stories: *Ḥālāt min al-layl yaḡshāhā an-nahār* (2005).

Su'ād al-'Arīmī was born in 1954 in al-'Ayn. She works for the Emirati University in al-'Ayn. She has published the following collections of short stories: *Ṭufūl* (1990), *Ḥafl Ghamrān* (1997), *Ra's dhī Yaẓan* (2008).

Maryam Jum'a Faraj was born in 1956 in Dubai. She graduated in English Literature from the University in Baghdad. She received her MA in Translatology from London University in Great Britain. She has published the following collections of short stories: *Fayrūz* (1988), *Mā'* (1993), *Imrā' istithnā' iyya*.

Fāṭima al-Mazrū'ī was born in Abu Dhabi. She graduated in History from the Emirates University. She writes articles for Emirati newspapers and magazines. She has published the following collections of short stories: *Laylat al-'īd* (2003), *Qarya qadīma fī jabal* (2004), *Wajh armala fātina* (2009) and the volume of poetry *Laytanī kuntu Warda* (2007).

'Abd Allah Ṣaqr Aḥmad al-Mirrī was born in 1952 in Dubai. He is a pioneer of the short story in the Emirates. He works as a coach and sports referee. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt). He has published

the following collections of short stories: *Qulūb la tarḥam* (1969), *al-Khashaba* (ed. I, 1975; ed. II 1999). He is also the author of the volume of poetry *Ightirāb fī zaman maslūb* (1975).

Ibrāhīm Mubārak was born in 1952 in Umm Suqeym. He graduated in Psychology. He is a member of the Emirati Literary Association (Ittiḥād Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-Imārāt) and the Arab Writers' Association (Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb wa Uḍabā' al-'Arab). He works for the newspaper "al-Ittiḥād" (he writes the weekly column *Sawāḥil*). He has published the following collections of short stories: *aṭ-Ṭaḥlub* (1989), *Uṣṣūr al-thalj* (1992), *Khān* (1999), *Dajr ṭā'ir al-layl* (2005).

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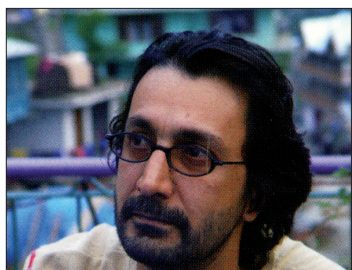
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